

BALBOA OF DARIÉN:

Discoverer of the Pacific



by Kathleen Romoli

author of COLOMBIA: GATEWAY TO SOUTH AMERICA

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A magic quality—an aura of romance, a suggestion of legend—surrounds the name of Darién, the first mainland colony in the Western Hemisphere, and that of Balboa, the conquistador whose destiny was interwoven with its brief life. In 1510 Vasco Núñez de Balboa, a handsome, devil-may-care Spaniard, set out for immortal glory concealed in a flour barrel on a ship bound for the mainland. He was among the rugged *compañeros* who founded Darién; it was his leadership during the colony's early, difficult years that made Darién a crucial link in the chain of empire and exploration, and it was his discovery of the Pacific that has given both Balboa and Darién immortal fame.

The story of Balboa of Darién is gaudy and dramatic, with barely a pause between crises. It is a pageant roundly constructed, with thoroughly vicious villains and hot-tempered men fighting for wealth, and with a hero who combined vision and practical wisdom with a forcefulness that made him both "feared and beloved." In the few years that Balboa's star burned brightly Darién was a thriving settlement that set the example for the whole Spanish conquest in the New World, and when he died under the executioner's knife Darién died too and returned to the jungle.

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BOOKS BY KATHLEEN ROMOLI

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FOREWORD

THE PLEASURES and problems of historical research need no explanation to its addicts, and very little to people with a taste for detective stories. The sifting of evidence; the dogged pursuit of clues; the plausible testimony pulverized by a chance word and the respectable witnesses who turn out to be suspect; the establishment of times (where was the King on December 23, 1511?); the holy joy of finding a priceless lead in an apparently extraneous purchase of salt mackerel; the climactic moments when a dozen awkward pieces fall suddenly into a beautiful, logical whole—these belong to historical detection as much as to that of crime fictional or otherwise. So, of course, does the psychological side of investigation: history may follow a vast rhythm as the stars their courses, but its individual developments are largely the products of emotion.

The drawback—and the charm—in historical sleuthing is that so many cases can never be closed. The witnesses are dust, and some of the chief exhibits are missing. And whereas the evidence which is preserved may be abundant, it is frequently inaccurate and seldom impartial.

The story of Darién and Balboa in these chapters is founded on documents of the time and on the accounts of contemporary chroniclers. Indubitably authentic sources, they provide a remarkable amount of information, comparatively little of which can be taken

whole with simple faith. Part of the trouble is mechanical: a document may date from the time of the colony, and yet be the faulty copy of a lost original, to say nothing of the errors which blossom in more modern renderings from the difficult script of that period. Considering what some of the manuscripts that confront the paleographer are like, no one—except, possibly, another paleographer—can be hypercritical; nevertheless, at times the mistakes seem excessive even to the charitable. As to translations, charity can sometimes only draw a kindly veil; even those of eminent authorities can conceal traps for the unwary. Some slips are merely diverting: Harrisse's translation of *Punta de lobos marinos* (Point of Seals) as "Point of the Good Sailors," evidently inspired by the term "sea wolf" for an old salt, has a macabre charm when collated with the 1516 report of the expeditionaries who found so many sea wolves at the promontory that they killed sixty-six of them and brought their skins to Spain. But it is not so funny when his translation of a letter from the Bishop of Darién alters the meaning from beginning to end. And the translator who turned Martyr's description of Balboa as "an outstanding fighter with the sword" into "an egregious ruffian" has a good deal to answer for.

A far greater problem is, however, the rampant bias of contemporary letters and reports. A more contentious, invidious lot than the conquistadores would be hard to find; their representations to the authorities in Castile bulge with ulterior motives, so that they can be evaluated only when one has a fair idea of what axes are being ground, and why. Slander was common coin, and guided by the principle which promotes million-dollar damage suits in hope of getting ten thousand, they piled it on; their talent for omission, subterfuge, and bland prevarication is neutralized only by its obviousness. Since it is the official correspondence which has been preserved, and since in Darién this was predominantly the expression of a cabal to ruin Balboa, and since, furthermore, it was designed to present a peccant administration as just men made perfect, it is evident that reports cannot be taken straight. Depositions in lawsuits and in the *probanzas* by which veteran conquistadores set forth their merits are somewhat better: about as reliable as such testimony would be today. Finally, there are the honest errors—things forgotten or ill-remembered, or misunderstood when heard at second hand. No wonder one clings to the dry entries in

notarial registers with something like affection: if a shipmaster is buying salted flour for his forthcoming voyage, it is at least certain that he has not yet left; if he is found delivering goods and dispatches at the other end, he has undoubtedly arrived.

This brings us to the chroniclers. They were giants; we could not do without them, for lacking their narratives our knowledge of the early years of American colonization would be a skeleton affair. But here, too, one must keep in mind the maxim that should hang, in letters of gold, over every student's desk: "*It ain't necessarily so.*" Of the three prime chroniclers who tell of the Darién colony, one never saw the Indies; one knew parts of the Indies well, but not Darién; one was in Darién, but for no more than eleven months during the course of our story. In sum, eighty to ninety per cent of what they recount is hearsay. Two of them were influenced by strong personal prejudices, and the other got much of his data from tendentious sources. Sometimes they appear to have made an immediate record of what they learned, sometimes they are clearly at grips with inadequate notes—the kind of cryptic memoranda which seem perfectly sufficient when jotted down, and are later so baffling; all too frequently they rely on memory. All things considered, it is not surprising that they occasionally go astray; what is astonishing is the amount of information they amassed, and how much of it is substantially correct.

The fact that the chronicles are indispensable, that when they stand uncontradicted they must be accepted and when (as often happens) they contradict each other they must be weighed, means that the more we know about their authors, the better. The notes which follow are no more than a bare introduction.

The three prime chroniclers were, in the order in which they wrote: Pietro Martire d'Anghiera, called in English "Peter Martyr," who as cleric, humanist, papal prothonotary, counselor, and newsman spent the greater part of his life at the Castilian Court; Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, who was Chief Inspector of Gold and Barter and Chief Notary of the Crown in Darién; and Bartolomé de las Casas, Protector of the Indians. With regard to Darién, a fourth annalist must be added to their number: Pascual de Andagoya.

Martyr, urbane, curious, and personally objective, was keenly alive to the import of what he was the first to call the "New World." He

made a point of talking with men home from the Indies, and even of getting them to put their recollections in writing—memoranda which, alas, he usually threw away as soon as read. He was on familiar terms with ministers, prelates, colonial officials; Columbus was his friend; he was allowed to read especially interesting reports from the New World—notably those of Balboa about the discovery of the Pacific—which vanished before others could consult them. And he wrote while events were still warm or, indeed, still in process.

But Martyr was a reporter, not a historian. He sent out a steady stream of newsletters (over eight hundred of them were published shortly after his death: the *Opus epistolarum*). His eight "Decades" on the New World, published complete as *De orbe novo* in 1530, were on much the same order—lengthy epistles written in installments, having all the freshness and faults of any reportage of happenings in an unknown and infinitely remote locale. In the letters he is direct and insouciant ("I'm writing this with one foot in the stirrup. . . . Good-by—take care of yourself."), and, though sometimes pompous in the "Decades," can also be sprightly: no mean feat when writing in Latin to popes and cardinals. With regard to Balboa his data is a kind of sandwich: an approving layer, which coincides with reports received after the discovery of the Pacific, between two unfavorable ones which reflect the communications of Balboa's sworn enemies.

Oviedo was also at home in Court circles; he had been one of the lads chosen as companions for the heir apparent, Prince Juan, in whose household Columbus' sons lived as pages. His direct interest in the Indies began when, at the age of thirty-six, he was appointed to the official posts in Darién. Clever, cultured, worldly, he had considerable humor, a taste for anecdote, and a healthy sense of his own importance. His prejudices were lusty, and never more so than in connection with Darién, where he was himself deeply involved with politics and personalities. He was a persistent man, and he had the courage of his preconceptions; twenty-five and thirty years later they passed, unfaded, into his chronicle. Some were in the category of fixations, but it is only fair to say that others were extremely sound.

At the same time Oviedo was in many ways particularly well informed. During his scant year there in 1514–1515 he had access to

all records, attended the meetings of what might be termed the governing board, made it his business to know what the Governor and his colleagues were up to, and although Darién was already under sentence of abandonment when he returned in 1520, he was still able to find out a good deal that could be learned only on the spot. He was an amateur naturalist of merit. And he is the only annalist who read the log of Balboa's expedition of discovery to the Pacific and the papers relating to the discoverer's judicial murder—both of which disappeared thereafter in suspicious circumstances. Most of what he recounts of Darién and Balboa was written around 1546.

Casas, the third of our chroniclers, was the son of a prosperous merchant with interests in the Indies, and a graduate of the University of Salamanca. He went to Santo Domingo in 1502; seven years later he became the first priest ordained in the New World. After two years with Velásquez in the conquest of Cuba, he renounced the land and serfs allotted to him there, returned to Hispaniola, proceeded to Castile in 1515 and, save for a few months in 1517, was in Spain until the latter part of 1520. In Cuba he had seen a great light; thenceforth his devouring aim was the freedom and well-being of the Indians. Vehemently rejecting the thesis that American aborigines were an inferior race predestined to servitude—unlike Moslems and Negroes, whose enslavement he approved and even promoted—he denied the right of Spain to New World dominion and furiously denounced the greedy cruelties of the conquistadores. Quite naturally his writings, especially a virulent little work published in 1552, enjoyed the most gratifying popularity in countries inimical to Spain; what is surprising is that despite his blazing attacks on his country and his countrymen, he lived long in security and honors.

Casas' noble, if restricted, obsession was inherent in everything he wrote; it accounts for his exaggerations and, at times, misrepresentations as well as for the limpid conscience in which he reveals some rather questionable methods used to his ends. Like most fanatics, he identified himself with the Divine intention; it followed that people who disagreed with him were wicked, and that personal piques were apt to take on the thunder of indignation in a sacred cause. Conversely, he had only good to say of certain deplorable persons who happened to favor him. No one has ever doubted that Casas was an

honest crusader, but it has been claimed that he was not an honest historian. The judgment, whatever his historiographical failings, is undue. Like so much criticism, it presupposes that the author's aim was what the critic thinks it should have been; it also ignores the facts of life.

Casas was not trying to be impartial. A fighter to the last, he was not only incapable of a coldly precise reconstruction: it never occurred to him that it would be desirable to attempt one. Secondly, he wrote the greater part of his *Historia* forty and more years after the events: starting in 1552, continuing with many interruptions for ten years, and adding further bits and pieces almost until his death, at the age of ninety-two, in 1566. In everyday life we do not expect unbiased total recall even of less combatively minded octogenarians. As for those long, ostensibly verbatim quotations of dramatic discussions occurring nearly half a century earlier, the scholars who grant them the accuracy of tape recordings are as unreasonable as those who damn them for deliberate distortions. What old warrior, in forty years, does not reshape memory nearer to the heart's belief?

Casas (he calls himself thus, not Las Casas) amassed an extraordinary amount of information, including quantities of documentary material, most of which—but not all—was collected in support of his theses. Certain tricks of style are useful guides: accounts of matters he learned about at second hand are in general positively phrased, and modifying as-I-recalls or if-memory-serves are attached to those he observed himself, suggesting that he made careful notes in the first case which in the second seemed unnecessary; “probably” or “my understanding is” in his lexicon means he does not know what happened and supposes the worst; the “it was believed” formula usually indicates that he is putting over a bit of Casasiana, possibly libelous. Concerning Darién, he was informed to some extent by personal acquaintance with Balboa and other actors in the drama, and to a greater one by Martyr's works and a lost manuscript called *La Barbárica* (written by Diego de la Tobilla, who went to the Isthmus in 1514), both of which he cites or paraphrases extensively. His style is involved, but it is also vigorous and vivid; he can display, if not exactly humor, at least a rather savage facetiousness; he was uncommonly widely read, he had a mind for detail and he was in and out of

the Antilles and Central America over a period of forty-five years. Many historians declare that, could they have only one chronicler, they would choose Casas.

Pascual de Andagoya, our last contemporary narrator, had no pretension of being a capital-letter chronicler: he merely wrote a memoir of what he had seen and experienced. But he saw more of the Darién colony, knew its contending personages better, took part in more of its expeditions, and told of it more equanimously than anyone else whose writing has survived. By some miracle he kept aloof from the clashing rivalries about him, despite close association with the chief protagonists. A minder of his own business, he was little given to judgment, which is why his occasional calm appraisals can be devastating. In fact, Andagoya had the makings of a first-class historian; it is a pity that he did not set himself to be one from the first, although the idea is a lot to ask of a nineteen-year-old recruit to adventure. His *Relación*, or part of it, has been included in modern works, and Markham made a translation of it. Considering Andagoya's career—he was later the forerunner of Pizarro on the Pacific coast and titular governor of a province—he deserves more attention than he has received. The note on him in the *Enciclopedia Espasa* is curtailed, inaccurate, and entirely silent about his writings.

The disappearance of so many key documents written by, or relating to, Balboa is as intriguing as it is frustrating. It is not the only loss: there is that of all the confidential reports sent by clerics and friars to their superiors in Spain, to say nothing of the total blank in so far as private correspondence is concerned. The thought of coming on a bundle of yellowed dispatches subtracted circa 1521 from the files, or the classic coffer of intimate letters by some gossiping colonist, is a researcher's dream of hidden treasure. Meanwhile the gaps in the evidence and those not always identifiable errors in the chronicles explain why no one describing the early years of Spanish rule in America can escape the nagging sensation—like a dull but persistent toothache—that any day some new find, some oversight of his own, will arise to smite him. It also explains the habit-forming stimulation of historical sleuthing: in the last analysis there is no such thing as a definitive history.

The statements in these chapters which are at variance with those in other books on the subject have been carefully verified. In the strictest sense few of them are "new": that is to say, the material for them can be found in documents which, with limited exceptions, are available in print. True, it seldom occurs in large, convenient hunks; mostly it is a matter of shreds and fragments, to be fitted together by the collating, or jigsaw, method. Nevertheless, first credit, and my gratitude, belong to the researchers and compilers whose dedicated labors have given us hundreds of volumes of true sources. It seems ungracious to remark that some of the most valuable documentation is attached to narratives which contain rather startling errors, and in any case it is beside the point: the documents are there, placed at the disposal of us all. In a few instances it has been impractical to cite all the references: e.g., a sentence about the family of the discoverer of Darién rests on gleanings from twenty-six separate notarial acts. Otherwise the sources are given in the notes.

Many chroniclers besides those given in the notes as chief sources relate the events of Darién, notably, Antonio de Herrera, *in extenso*, and Gómara, in admirably compact style. They will be found in the Bibliography, but because most of their material was taken from Casas, Martyr, and Oviedo, they are referred to only when they present credible particulars which do not appear elsewhere.

In the matter of proper names I have adopted the spelling most common at the time. Orthography of names was a rather casual business in those days (consider Shakespeare!), and when it came to unfamiliar Indian ones, any guess was good. There are at least a dozen ways of spelling Coquibacoa, including "Arcañ batoia" and "Argesibacoa." The question was, of course, complicated by the fact that many colonists were more at home with a sword or crossbow than a pen and that some eminent navigators were unable to letter their own charts, but even the most literate usually omitted the accent in writing Indian words and had a hit-or-miss way with cedillas—to occasionally disconcerting effect, as when a *çabra* (nobleman) turns up without explanation in an otherwise Spanish text as a *cabra*, or she-goat.

In translating letters and reports I have been literal rather than literary; the authors were often awkward writers, and to tidy up their style would be to misrepresent them. I have, however, supplied some

punctuation by way of marking a trail through the denser syntactical jungles. Any conversational quotes are so given in the chronicles or, more rarely, in correspondence. The maps are based on those made from recent aerial survey; routes of exploration and travel and the location of tribes and chiefdoms were determined from innumerable references in writings contemporary to their conquest, checked with later geographical data and to some extent by what I have been able to see myself of the country ranged by the men of Darién.

During the years of tracking and collating the material for this book I have had reason to be grateful to many more people than can be mentioned here; to each of them, this is a renewed expression of my appreciation. I wish, however, to thank especially the helpful friends in Colombia: the former National Librarian, Dr. Enrique Uribe White; the Director of the National Archives, Dr. Enrique Ortega Ricaurte; the President of the Colombian Academy of History, Dr. Luis Augusto Cuervo, and numerous members of the Academy; the Directors of the Geographical Institute of Colombia, Dr. Belisario Ruiz Wilches and Dr. José Ignacio Ruiz; and other kindly people who put their erudition and their own libraries at my disposal, and who patiently indulged me in those arguments which are so clarifying of one's ideas. I want, too, to remember three friends who are no longer with us: Dr. Laureano García Ortiz, Dr. Daniel Samper Ortega, and Dr. Julio Garzón Nieto, formerly Chief of the Bureau of Longitudes of the Ministry of Foreign Relations. My thanks go also to the President and members of the Academy of History of Panama for allowing me to attend their meetings, to the librarians everywhere whose assistance was above and beyond the call of duty—particularly, those of the New York Public Library—and to Jean Luburger Whitnack for her careful and constructive work on the manuscript.

K. R.

New York
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PROLOGUE

DARIÉN is a name of familiar romance, but it has come to have something the quality of legend: heroic, vaguely stimulating and as disembodied as Avalon or Xanadu. More often than not it stands for a single climactic moment, the discovery of the Pacific; and even that is haunted by the shade of "stout Cortez," magnificent on his misplaced peak. Yet Darién was important, and not merely as a springboard for one transcendent exploration. Moreover, its importance was much more than a passing quirk of destiny (although it was that, too, at the time), for its influence on the course of American history went on in widening circles long after Darién itself had sunk from sight.

Darién was the first mainland colony in the Americas, the capital of a vast and only partially defined dominion. It was an episcopal see with full chapter, and at one time, before the black death struck, it boasted three thousand Spanish residents, "some of the most splendid and select people ever to come to these Indies." Its vicissitudes were followed with vibrant interest in the palaces and counting houses and portside taverns of Europe, and its administration cost the Crown some fifteen thousand ducats a year in salaries. It was the mother of exploration and settlement from Mexico to Tierra del Fuego, and its story—at once a gaudy melodrama and an outline of early colonial methods—constitutes a small-scale working model, handy and complete, of the whole Spanish conquest in the New World.

The facts of Darién can be reconstructed with reasonable accuracy provided one keeps as close as possible to original sources. If there is a haunting suggestion of technicolor about them, the fault is in the modern view. Admittedly the story is out of line with much now passed as realism: it is roundly constructed, with proper villains and a more than proper hero; it presents adventure, disasters, plots, and difficult triumphs with barely a pause between crises, and it is generally prone to pageant. Nevertheless it is true. The hard-bitten *compañeros*, the loot (politely known as revenue) in piled-up gold and quarts of pearls, the greenhorn *caballeros*, haggard but haughty in mildewed elegance of silk and velvet, the ladies late of Their Highnesses' court or of the brothels of Seville, the busy bureaucrats deep in reports, corruption and red tape, were never half-tone subjects. But however fantastic, they were real.

For that matter, the setting itself was fantastic, not so much because it was untamed and exotic—a description then applicable to all the New World—as because it was so illogical.

At the southernmost corner of the Caribbean, where the plunging Colombian coast line meets the Isthmus of Panama, lies the Gulf of Urabá, a pocket of the sea between the mainland and the mountainous root of the Isthmus. The eastern side of the Gulf, inside Caribana Point, is a region of scrubby hills and broken, palm-fringed beaches, once the domain of the fierce Urabae; the whole lower part is bordered by swamps, behind which stretches the half-drowned wilderness of the Atrato River Valley, half of the western, or Isthmian, side is taken up by the mangrove sloughs and wandering channels of the Atrato Delta. Above the delta there is a strip of rugged coast where the land climbs in ridges dark with rain forest to the crest of the barrier Sierra. This strip, from the Río Tanela to the limit of the Gulf, was Darién.

A more improbable site for a front-rank colony could not well be imagined. Darién had no decent harbor, no large rivers, little arable land. It dominated no trade routes, actual or potential. Ships had a hard time reaching it and a worse one getting away, and for any vessel too big to beach easily a stopover was fatal. Its climate was unhealthy and (most damning of all in that age) its mineral resources were insignificant. As if to complete the picture, its settlement, Santa María

del Antigua, was tucked away in a narrow, rather marshy valley five miles from the sea—a strategically inapt location where it was impossible to produce food for more than a few hundred people. Logic, however, has always put up a feeble show against chance and human daring; in the face of geographical reason Darién proceeded to establish itself as a crucial link in the chain of empire.

The protagonist of the Darién story was Vasco Núñez de Balboa, the handsome young swashbuckler who became one of the greatest figures in the panorama of discovery. The place and the man are so intimately bound that they cannot be viewed separately. Almost everything we know of Balboa is centered in Darién, as if he had no substance save in connection with it; and without Balboa, Darién might never have existed for history. He was with the armada which discovered it; nine years later he was among the *compañeros* who conquered it. It was occupied at his suggestion, he commanded it during the early years, and from it he went out to the explorations which culminated at the Pacific. Other conquistadores influenced events in the colony, some of them decisively: the green-eyed Governor Pedrarias, who was called the Wrath of God; the doughty Bishop; a host of maneuvering officials and colonists. But behind their actions one can usually find Balboa, whom they humiliated but could never ignore—a constantly determinant force by reason of the emotions he inspired. When he was destroyed, Darién did not survive him. The government moved to Panamá, Santa María del Antigua soon went back to the jungle, and in time the very name of Darién was taken away and given to other provinces.

The whole extraordinary cycle, from discovery to abandonment, lasted little more than twenty years, and less than ten of these enclosed all that is significant in the life of the colony and of its hero. It was enough. In the brief span allowed them, Darién and Vasco Núñez de Balboa achieved the dynamic immortality which outstrips mere fame, because Darién was “the beginning and foundation of all that was discovered and settled by Christians in Tierra Firme . . . and from that school of Vasco Núñez’ went forth captains and famous men for all that happened afterwards.”

I

SPANISH DOMINION in America, which began (like so many discoveries) as the unforeseen by-product of a search directed to other ends, was a haphazard development, growing from a foundling archipelago to a bicontinental empire mostly by chance and private speculation. This, indeed, was the only way it could grow. Aside from the difficulty of drawing up an official plan for nebulous possessions of unknown character and extent—something that even today's bureaucrats might find beyond them—the Spanish government was in no position to organize and finance systematic exploration. To be exact, there was no Spanish government for the first twenty-five years of American history, because Spain as we know it did not exist. Despite the unity which made Isabel of Castile and Fernando of Aragon, as rulers, almost a single entity, their respective kingdoms had not been amalgamated. In those first decades the New World realms belonged exclusively to Castile, a country so recently emerged from feudal anarchy as to be scarcely a nation.¹

It could be argued that if prolonged adversity is the stimulus to creative action in peoples, Castile was exactly primed for her new imperial role. Other indications of preparedness were, to put it mildly, slight, except for the special quality of her sovereigns.

When Isabel succeeded to the throne, eighteen years before Columbus discovered the Antilles, the kingdom of Castile and Leon was

little better than a collection of unruly states. The monarchy was bankrupt of prestige as well as treasury. The Moors still held Granada, the French were harrying Biscaya, some of the most powerful grandees were allied with the King of Portugal to seize the throne by force. The new sovereigns were young—Isabel was twenty-three, Fernando twenty-two—and they were bone poor. It is doubtful if they had been able to pay back the money they had borrowed to be married; certainly they were hard put to it to provide the bare necessities for their modest household. (Fernando's father, the old King of Aragon, could not help: he had just been reduced to pawning his fur cloak.) They were an unusually attractive pair, but they did not appear destined to remold their country and see it launched as a world power.

Fortunately, there was a great deal more to Isabel and Fernando than good looks and high intentions. The white-and-gold, picture-book Queen had a mind for government and the moral and physical force to back it. She could ride as fast and far as any cavalryman, and then sit up half the night over reports and dispatches; she demanded information and welcomed advice, and if in the end "she followed for the most part her own judgment," the judgment was generally good. Fernando—who has been a good deal maligned, owing to a tendency to accept the opinion of his bitterest adversaries as gospel—was a little more earthy than his queen, a little more elastic and somewhat less inclined to the discourses of "religious men and those of righteous life"—a pastime to which he was apt to prefer a hard game of pelota or a day's hunting. One does not associate Isabel with a sense of humor, but Fernando's was keen enough to let him enjoy the comic aspects of even his most unfortunate moments. "Well proportioned, with fine features and laughing eyes . . . he had a singular gift, that whoever talked with him straightway loved him and wished to serve him." Despite all this charm Fernando was both able and conscientious. He not only sought advice, but often took it. He tolerated an almost startling degree of plain speaking from his subjects, with whom he had, for the most part, the patience of a large dog in a yard full of scrappy terriers out to get the best bones. No one, however, could have called him ingenuous. And although the velvet glove was padded, the hand within was firm.

They had their faults. They made mistakes; the Inquisition, with its corollary anti-Semitism, stands heavy against their names. As one of their favorite courtiers remarked, their candor and promises were not always proof against the pressure of expediency, and they sometimes used dubious means to desirable ends—defects which might be described as endemic among people in their position. Yet, compared to their immediate predecessors and, indeed, to the majority of anointed rulers, they were paragons of virtue and enlightened efficiency. Had they been otherwise, the history of America would have had a different course.

In twenty years of skillful effort Isabel and Fernando gave their realms a methodical administration, impartial justice, sound money, and the merit system in civil service. An even greater achievement was implied in these reforms: the curbing of the near-independent power of the great nobles. Granada, last outpost of Islam in the Peninsula, had been taken. Castile did not look like a mother of empire in 1492, but she was beginning to look like a nation. She was able to grasp at the opportunities presented by Columbus' discovery. This initiative was due in part to a merciful ignorance of the measure of what she was getting into, and more directly, to the foresight of her sovereigns, who were remarkably prompt in asserting a right to whatever might lie beyond the Ocean Sea.

Columbus had barely had time to make his report before Isabel's claim was submitted to the Pope, who, as Vicar of God, to whom belongs the world, had a clear jurisdiction in the matter. The Pope, with almost equal celerity, issued a bull—or rather, three bulls—the gist of which was that Castile was mistress of all heathen lands lying beyond a meridian a hundred leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. To this Portugal objected; the west coast of Africa was her preserve, and she wanted more leeway. In 1494 the question was amicably settled in the Treaty of Tordesillas, by which the Line of Demarcation was moved westward to a meridian three hundred and seventy leagues (1374 miles) from the Cape Verde Islands and the Azores. Portugal was recognized mistress of everything east of the Line; everything west of it, "discovered or to be discovered" (exclusive of such Christian kingdoms as might be revealed), was to belong to the sovereigns of Castile "and to their successors forever and ever."

The next steps were to find out what had been acquired and to nail it down by markers and acts of possession pending actual occupation. These were not so easy. Armadas were expensive, and the treasury was in a chronic state of emergency. Isabel had borrowed to finance Columbus (though not on her jewels, for the sufficient reason that these were already in pawn), but borrowing has a limit. Nor could the still fragmentary "new realms" provide the capital: America, for the first forty years, was not the bonanza that is often supposed. Until 1502 it produced practically nothing, and in the period 1503-1525 the total Crown revenues received in Spain from the New World, on all counts, averaged a scant 40,000 pesos a year. The solution was to harness private enterprise.

Thus discovery became a business, and men sailed beyond the baths of all the western stars intent on a commercial gamble. The explorer was a licensed trader operating "at his own cost and risk," subject to official controls. He paid a royalty on all proceeds from his voyage (the classic *quinto del Rey*, or King's fifth) and kept the remainder for himself. At the same time he served as a royal agent ("our Captain") in staking possession of the lands he discovered, and he was bound to supply the government with charts of his explorations, copies of the ships' logs, and reports covering everything from his barter deals to the *mores* of the Indians. In the early days the explorer-traders were usually master mariners with a little capital who found additional funds for their ventures on a profit-sharing basis which often extended to arrangements with officers and crew. In due course they were followed by more ambitious entrepreneurs: the concessionaires who contracted to conquer, convert, and settle specific *gobernaciones*.

Until 1503 negotiation and regulation of overseas voyages were conducted for the Crown by Juan de Fonseca, "Bishop in charge of discoveries." From 1499 on, however, successive discoveries made evident that the Indies of the Ocean Sea were more than could be handled by a one-man bureau. It was also apparent, and more urgently, that the exclusive privileges granted to Columbus at the time of the first discovery could not continue to be the basis of colonial administration. A new approach, or rather a first considered approach, to the whole problem of the new realms was imperative.

With his discovery of the Antilles, Cristoforo Colombo of Genoa

had been transformed into the Magnificent Lord Don Cristóbal Colón, Admiral of the Ocean Sea, Viceroy and Governor of all lands discovered by him or through his diligence. The sweeping titles, thought up by Columbus himself, were to be hereditary,² and were accompanied by the right to one tenth of all revenues from the aforementioned lands, plus that of securing one eighth of all profits from trade by subscribing one eighth of the expenses. Conferred in a flush of enthusiasm and the belief that only a few islands were involved, the privileges soon proved excessively awkward, the more so as Columbus turned out to be a singularly inept administrator. As the profile of a vast new continent continued to unroll, they became grotesque. Columbus clung obstinately to the letter of the grants, liberally interpreted: anything discovered after he had shown the way should be added to his preserve (in 1502 he signed himself as, among other things, "Viceroy and Governor General of the Islands, and of the Mainland of Asia and of India"). He also tried to claim, as hereditary admiral, one third of the revenues from commerce in the Indies.

If ever expediency were justified versus promises, it was in this absurd situation. The sovereigns could not hand over the New World to Columbus and his heirs for all time; more immediately, they could not even leave him to rule Hispaniola. A majority of the settlers had rebelled against his authority, and to their complaints was added a rumor that he planned to deliver the Indies to the Republic of Genoa.³ Columbus was removed from the government of the colony, and the sovereigns, while they did not deny his privileges, gradually pared them down to relatively innocuous proportions. Meanwhile they set about organizing a system of colonial government. In 1502 Fray Nicolás de Ovando was sent to take over in Hispaniola,⁴ and in January, 1503, the Casa de Contratación de las Indias (the House of Trade of the Indies) was established in Seville.

The Casa de Contratación was entrusted to three executive officials: a treasurer, a factor, and an accountant-comptroller (*contador*). Subordinate officials with the same titles were attached to the administrations in the new realms. Almost at once the term "royal officials" came to mean those of the Casa exclusively. As the Casa evolved from an institution for fostering and supervising trade to an all-

embracing ministry of colonial affairs, the officials were invested with enormous power and responsibility. Before long the House of Trade blanketed every phase of the economy of overseas development, and its authority stretched to a good many political aspects as well. It was a clearinghouse for goods and treasure, both public and private. It collected royalties and revenues accruing from the colonies and managed Crown properties in the Indies. It controlled overseas shipping in all its aspects: letters patent and contracts, inspection, registry, insurance policies, emigration. It was a customhouse, a bureau of records, and a hydrographic office. It procured arms, stores, and ships for government service. It was a department of audit and accounts. It served as custodian and executor of estates, received all confiscate or embargoed goods. It maintained a school of navigation, filed and collated charts, and licensed pilots for the Indies. And its judicial powers were extensive.

Incredible as it may seem, the royal officials handled all this with considerable efficiency, and with a staff which most modern governments would consider inadequate for a subdivision in a quiet department. Their salaries were reasonable and their perquisites large; those in Spain were generally honest and their deputies in the Indies were usually venal.

When it came to the principles of colonial policy, Isabel and Fernando displayed their usual good sense. The Indies of the Ocean Sea might be strange and wild, but a healthy self-supporting community was much the same everywhere, and its foundations were industrious, God-fearing residents and a productive agriculture. Gold and silver were, of course, highly desirable, but at this stage they were seen as the frosting on the cake. Desirable emigrants (a category from which Jews, Moors, and most foreigners were excepted) were offered every inducement to settle permanently, particularly if they took their families. Every ship bound for the Indies carried seeds, plants, tools, and assorted domestic animals. Farmers, stockmen, and artisans of every trade were sent as favored colonists, if necessary on salary. No important settlement was without its doctors, pharmacist, and, of course, its priests and missionary friars—not to mention an infestation of lawyers. The Indies, in short, were to be made into a tropical extension of the mother country.

The Indians, to be sure, presented an exotic element for which there was no domestic precedent, but here, too, the King and Queen had sound ideas. The Indians would be absorbed into the general scheme as free subjects of the Crown, participants in the unity of religion, law, and culture with Spain. Their independence would be lost, but their souls would be saved. They would supply labor while enjoying the protection and spiritual guidance of their white masters, and thus by precept and example be converted into "Christian citizens."

The first part of the program went well in spite of the difficulty of regulating any frontiersmen—and especially, Spanish frontiersmen—in a generally ill-disciplined age, and later, of the disrupting effects of fabulous mining wealth. The colonists built cities "by and large as fine as any in Spain"; within the lifetime of the first settlers, Hispaniola was exporting hides, bacon, sugar in quantity, all from imported stock, and suffered from a glut of cattle. The great University of San Marco was founded only twenty years after Pizarro discovered Peru. Where the program broke down was in the part which referred to the natives; and this in turn was largely because the Spaniards in the Indies did not fit into the role assigned to them.

The colonists did not care about forming free citizens; they wanted slaves, or the reasonable facsimile thereof, known as *naborias*, so that they might live in a gentility to which many were unaccustomed. The Spanish workmen would not stay put: once in the Indies they developed an acute class consciousness and ceased to be laborers. In vain Fernando pointed out that a man who had worked with his hands until the day he sailed from Castile had no excuse for becoming a pretentious vagrant in Hispaniola. The settlers thought differently: If the better-off Indians kept slaves and shunned menial tasks, were Spaniards of the master race to be less than the naked heathen? The perils and discomforts of life in the new realms were accepted, but those who endured this life should be allowed to make a good thing of it. Colonial officials were equally unhelpful, for, favored by distance, they were masters of passive resistance to inconvenient instructions, and most humane instructions were inconvenient. Even the Indians provided some stumbling blocks, particularly those who refused to come to terms with either Christianity or the Christians,

and who exhibited cannibal habits highly unsuitable in free vassals of the Crown.

Against such odds the vision of sober colonies living by husbandry and pious paternalism was bound to suffer. The *repartimiento*, a colonial invention which signified a distribution of the Indians among the settlers, was adopted with enthusiasm and justified to the sovereigns on the ground that it was the only way to regenerate the inherently depraved aborigines. There were some doubts in Spain, however, and in time the repartimiento became the *encomienda*. This sounds much better, because an encomienda is a trust; the effect was the same, for if in theory the *encomenderos* were benevolent guardians operating (after 1513) under enlightened labor laws, in practice they worked the Indians as serfs, often literally to death.

What comfort the Indians received was almost all from the missionary friars. It is true that the Church approached the heathen in a manner more peremptory than persuasive: "You will compel . . . the barbarous nations to come to the knowledge of God," Pope Clement VII told Fernando's successor, "if necessary by force of arms." One cannot help noting a certain absence of loving-kindness in this shotgun salvation. It is true that many missionaries had a robust intolerance that matched to the line the narrow insensibility of the average conquistador. But it is equally true that there were many others whose fervor was tempered by compassion, who worked in consecrated devotion to all that was finest in their office, and who both taught and championed the Indians to considerable effect.

It is only fair to add that for all the insensate cruelty of the initial years the Indians under Spanish rule were more fortunate (or less unfortunate) than those of North America. They were not excluded from society, or barred from living in their own land; their souls were a matter of lively concern; their half-caste children were recognized. The Spaniards exploited and abused them, but they also married them.

Furthermore, conquest of Spanish America, as distinct from subsequent administration, cannot be said to have been molded by policies formulated in Spain. The policies existed, but the pattern was determined by the conquistadores.

The men who enlisted for the Indies were of all kinds: landless nobles and illiterate mercenaries, merchants and sailors, lawyers and

roistering soldiers of fortune. But almost all the captains and *compañeros* who went, eighty or a hundred or two hundred at a time, to invade and conquer a hemisphere, had certain fundamental characteristics in common. They were devout, rapacious, and incredibly valiant; they had a raw pride and an inborn flair for rather crude intrigue; they stood by each other in appalling hardship and were furiously jealous of each other's successes. The product of centuries of warfare and spare comfort, endurance was bred in their bones, violence was in their blood, and safety was the last of their ambitions.

They were also intensely practical. Underneath their matter-of-fact approach to extravagant undertakings lay what one can only call a lack of imagination, and this in turn was largely due to simple faith. Nothing could have been more useful. Their amazing self-confidence was not undermined by fearful speculation, and they were interested, but not in the least disconcerted, by the strange world they discovered. Prepared for marvels, they would have taken hippogriffs and dog-headed giants in stride: since God can create purple centaurs as easily as He could barnyard fowls, it follows that centaurs are as natural as speckled hens, only not so common. By the same token they were spared heart-searchings as to the moral issues involved. Subjugation of the New World was obviously not only a right but a holy obligation: had not Their Catholic Highnesses been divinely appointed as its overlords and as instruments for the salvation of its erring inhabitants? Men such as these were not the stuff from which staid agricultural settlements were readily made, but they were perfect tools for conquest.

The conquerors were at their best in hard times, when they pulled together in stoic comradeship. When things went comparatively easily, they turned on each other like sled dogs out of harness—and since anything short of life-or-death emergency was comparative ease in their way of life, the periods of agreement were limited. Because their personal animosities did as much to mold events as any other factor in the conquest, they are important. For the Spaniards, to whom fighting was a kind of bitter sport, a legal battle was as enthralling in its own way as physical combat. They went to court at the drop of a grudge, and their cases often passed to the Royal Council; frequently they forwarded their grievances to the King himself. Government was

still direct and personal; Castilians were accustomed to address themselves directly to the throne (when a decree was issued on horseshoes, the farriers waited on Isabel and Fernando to talk it over), and to do so in no uncertain terms. Their Highnesses dictated replies in about the tone of a company president to a subordinate who is also an old acquaintance; indeed, the letters of Fernando to officials and colonists in the Indies are at times so avuncular that one cannot read them today without feeling something of the respect, irritation, and affection that might be provoked by those of an elderly relative.

However exasperating a correspondence largely composed of complaints and accusations might be, it was informative and hence to be encouraged. Fernando and his ministers, wise in the perversities of their generation, could discount a good deal of it, but they could not ignore it. There was always a residue which required some action if the settlements were not to be left to their own unruly devices. Thus the spites and ambitions of men in the Indies, while they had little influence on long-range policies, affected so many government measures on current questions that it sometimes seems as if behind every official instruction one can glimpse some busy colonist contriving a rival's downfall.

The design woven by adventurers and kings, priests and savages, on a warp of chance and defiant nature, held much that was shocking even by the unexact standards of its time. It was never pretty, and little of it was kind, but it has a somber magnificence which no other conquering possesses. And sordid or splendid, it is all displayed in Darién.

II

ON JUNE 5, 1500, one Rodrigo de Bastidas was granted license "to go by the Ocean Sea to discover . . . islands or firm land, in the Indies or in any other part." This was the beginning of the Darién story, for it was Bastidas' small armada, pushing two hundred leagues beyond the last charted coast, which discovered Urabá and the eastern Isthmus, and Vasco Núñez de Balboa was with it.

It is appropriate that this should be the first event in Balboa's life to which one can put a date and a description. At that, it was an unobtrusive debut. Balboa was not a prominent member of the expedition; he had signed on as *escudero*, one of perhaps half a dozen fighting men recruited for the voyage, and he apparently completed his service without provoking so much as an anecdote for reminiscent use in the days of his fame. So far as can be gathered, he was a devil-may-care young fellow of twenty-four or -five, quite untroubled by intimations of greatness, and distinguished from all the other impecunious hidalgos who soldiered for a living only by his looks and his skill with a sword. These, however, were remarkable. Even in a day when every gentleman was expected to be handy with his blade, Balboa's talent was judged extraordinary, and he seems to have exercised it with some enthusiasm. His humor was gay, but in his green years he went with a reckless chip on his shoulder, happily alert for anything from a duel to a free-for-all. As for his appearance, it was such as to move to admiration even those who disapproved of him.

Casas, who knew him, says that Balboa was "very tall and well built, clean-limbed and strong, with the attractive bearing of a man of clear understanding, and capable of withstanding much hardship. . . . Of very gallant mien, and feat, and handsome of face and figure." He was fair, with reddish-golden hair and beard, and observers were struck by his sinewy grace of movement and his persuasive trick of speech. This bountiful endowment, which was to stand him in both good stead and bad, was also durable: the description refers to him as he was ten or twelve years after he sailed with Bastidas, when he was a seasoned veteran of the Indies.

It has been conjectured that Vasco Núñez was driven to enlist with Bastidas by stepmother trouble. The drawback to this theory is that the stepmother is also purely conjectural. She has been deduced from the fact that Balboa had a brother named Alvar, who was born in 1499. This, however, may only mean that their mother extended child-bearing over a considerable period, and since no one knows when Balboa was born (the date 1475 rests solely on the shaky authority of a guess at his age made by Casas long afterwards) the period may have been shorter than is usually supposed. For that matter, Alvar may have been one of those extracurricular children with whom every

caballero of the time appears to have been supplied, and who were so often accepted amiably by the legitimate family.

Very little, in fact, is known about Balboa's early years. He was born in Estremadura (cradle of conquistadores) in the craggy, castled town of Jerez de los Caballeros. We are told that his father was Don Nuño Arias de Balboa, and his mother a lady of Badajoz. Beyond this, all that can be said of his parents is that since he was "*hidalgo y de sangre limpio*," they were patrician, Catholic, racially "pure" and properly married—a combination not too easily come by in fifteenth-century Castile. Two brothers are known besides the youthful Alvar: Gonzalo, who seems to have been the eldest, and Juan.¹ The family, originally Galician, had been rich and powerful. It was tintured with the blood of the Gothic kings and of the royal house of Leon; in the time of the great Adelantado Garci Rodríguez de Valcarcel y Balboa, and for a century thereafter, it had produced prelates and ministers who shaped history with strong hands. By Balboa's time most of the early luster had faded; his immediate family was undeniably noble, but it was neither wealthy nor influential.²

Vasco Núñez received the education proper to his station: that is, he was put to serve in a great household. (As Oviedo, always a bit of a snob, remarked, "He who has not been a page ever smacks of the muleteer.") The training of such *criados* began in childhood and continued until they were full-fledged esquires—a system which made friction with stepmothers or any other relatives extremely difficult. Balboa's patron was Don Pedro Puertocarrero, the deaf Lord of Moguer, a circumstance which may have had something to do with his decision to volunteer with Bastidas. Moguer, like its near neighbors Palos and Huelva, had a mighty maritime tradition and a special interest in the Indies. Its men had sailed with Columbus; the Admiral's favorite caravel was built in its yards, and in its church he made solemn thanksgiving in 1493. And it was a Moguer pilot, young Peralonso Niño, who came back from a shoestring voyage in the spring of 1500 with nearly fifty pounds of declared pearls—and, it was rumored, as many more in contraband.

The salt air of adventure which blew about Moguer might well have infected any young man of spirit, particularly Balboa, whose patron's ill-health now kept him from the campaigns which were an escudero's

business. On the other hand, special stimulus was hardly necessary in 1500, when a new fever for exploration was running in Castile.

The revival of interest in the Indies followed six slack years in which discovery had found few takers, for the first fine rapture of 1493 had evaporated in the disillusionment of the Second Voyage. Columbus might swear that Cuba was really Mangi Province in China, but the evidence was against him. Where were the noble cities of a million hearths, the crowded ports, the merchant-philosophers in their marble palaces, and the ladies "living delicately like royalty"? Europe knew quite a lot about China, and even about Mangi, and the islands of the Ocean Sea did not fill the bill. Far from offering the rich cargoes of the Orient, they appeared to produce nothing that could repay the cost and peril of the voyage except the raw material for slaves, and slaving had been forbidden. Bootleg voyages were made, and undoubtedly ranged farther than will ever be known, but legitimate enterprise fought shy, and an experimental lifting of restrictions in 1495 had little effect beyond arousing Columbus to outraged protest. At the end of 1499, however, the slump ended in a sudden rebirth of confidence and giddy hopes. Admiral Columbus, on his third voyage, had discovered Paria.

The Admiral's report of the new find was a characteristic medley of fact and vaulting fancy, woven with passages about the Earthly Paradise, the strange shape of the other hemisphere ("like a woman's breast"), and the natural lushness of a country blessed by a climate derived from its proximity to heaven. But it was perfectly definite about indications of gold, pearls in quantity, and barter-minded natives; moreover, it suggested—without much emphasis—that Paria might be part of a continent. The northern branches of the Orinoco pour into the Gulf of Paria, and although Columbus had not seen the river, he had reasoned its existence from the volume of fresh water which sweetened the sea. He was inclined to believe that it was the river which flows from the Tree of Life, but on the other hand its evident size indicated a drainage basin larger than any island could provide. This was big news; if the new coast was the "mainland to the south" of which the Indians (and, for different reasons, the enterprising Portuguese) often spoke, it meant unlimited possibilities.

The information, duly publicized, brought an immediate rush for li-

censes of exploration. The offices of the Bishop-in-charge-of-discoveries hummed with activity as potential captains discussed routes, royalties, financial guaranties, and the minutiae of tonnage, supplies, crews, and contractual rights. Bishop Fonseca was a moving spirit in the creation of the Casa de Contratación, and it may be surmised that the idea came to him when he was coping with the post-Paria boom in voyages.

Since Fonseca continued to be a force in the affairs of the Indies for sixteen years after the foundation of the Casa—during which he was the most potent individual influence in official circles on matters affecting the colonies—it is worth pausing to consider him.

The Very Reverend Don Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, "one of the most prominent nobles of these realms," may be said to have begun his concern with the Indies in 1486, when he helped in the study of Columbus' project for a westward passage. In 1500 he had just exchanged the see of Badajoz for that of Córdoba, but he carried his diocese lightly, as he did succeeding ones, and although he was for a long period chief royal chaplain, history never catches his executive figure in the tender attitudes of a shepherd of souls. "Very able in worldly business," as a fellow prelate acidly observed, he devoted his remarkable talents to "matters more befitting a Biscayan than a bishop." As chief royal advisor on colonial affairs, and later President of the King's Council of the Indies, his judicial and political power was enormous. A big, sallow, arrogant man, Fonseca was reputed to be scrupulously just but seldom merciful in public life; in private, his many benefactions (which he strove to conceal) often extended to the transgressors he had condemned as judge-in-council. As for his priestly office he no doubt held it to be amply fulfilled, since the pious swashbucklers of Castile addressed themselves to conquest with a sword in one hand and the Cross in the other. The Bishop would have had only contempt for anyone satisfied to herd a single flock when he could supervise a mutton trust. Not everyone agreed with him on this point; in his latter years a friend told him that "candidly, everyone at Court says that you are a very solid Christian and a very indifferent bishop."

The contracts which passed over Fonseca's table were ingenuous but precise—as precise, that is, as was possible in dealing with

unknown quantities. The Spanish mind revels in juridical forms, and chancy adventure was never dressed with greater decorum than in these *capitulaciones*, encased in meticulous phrases like strange and dangerous women in starched chokers and steel-boned corsets. The agreement made with Rodrigo de Bastidas was not the first of the turn-of-the-century contracts, but it is said to have been the first to establish the rules for dual-purpose voyages of exploration and trade.

Bastidas, whose expedition was in most respects typical, or rather, prototypical, was himself unorthodox. He was neither a navigator nor a gentleman adventurer, but a middle-class notary with a snug practice in and about Seville.⁸ He had an enviable reputation for prudence and sober respectability. By 1500 he was married and was the father of a future bishop. Such mature and sterling worth suggests a graying, churchwarden type, one of those oversubstantial pillars of society who are more admirable than exciting. In point of fact he was still in his twenties, and obviously not too prudent to gamble his staid security in a perilous game. And although he was described as "of candid soul, and placid," he was no innocent. It took more than simple virtue to survive in the Indies, and Bastidas was to do better than survive: he took up residence and became rich.

Bastidas had many seafaring relatives and friends, but this is not enough to explain why he abandoned his sedentary calling for so extravagant an undertaking—or why, for that matter, he was considered a suitable captain for an expedition of discovery. At all events, he was an efficient organizer. Without apparent difficulty he secured his contract, his ships, some highly qualified officers, and a group of backers—the *armadores*—who provided funds for outfitting, all matters which often harried experienced captains to the point of collapse. Victuals and trade goods were purchased largely on credit; the *armadores* assumed the risks and the crews agreed to a share of the profits in lieu of pay. Final triumph, Bastidas persuaded Juan de la Cosa to go with him as partner and chief pilot. Cosa, familiarly known as Juan Viscaíno (Juan the Biscayan), was a master cartographer and one of the finest navigators of the time. A levelheaded fellow with an eye for business, he was dependable, courageous, and as undramatic as events would allow; he had sailed with Columbus in 1493 and with

Hojeda in 1499, and "he knew the regions of the Indies like the rooms of his own house."⁴

Stripped of its legal verbiage, Bastidas' contract was simple. He could go anywhere he liked beyond the Line of Demarcation, with the exception of coasts already staked by previous explorers, and trade for anything he fancied from gold to monsters. He was required to submit his armada to inspection before sailing and on its return; to carry Crown *veedores* (supervisors) on each ship to check all commercial transactions, and to deliver everything procured on the voyage to the officials in Cádiz. The quinto, which was not always a strict fifth, was in this case set at one fourth the net profits; the rest was for Bastidas "free and unencumbered." Finally, in consideration of his pledge to observe all the conditions and to offer ample security to the satisfaction of the Bishop, the notary was brevetted "our Captain of the said ships and of the people who go in them, with plenary authority and civil and criminal jurisdiction with all its incidental, dependent, emergent, adjunct and conjunct powers."⁵

The said ships were a *nao* and a *caravel*, plus a *bergantín* which was probably towed or carried aboard the *nao*. The *nao*, *Santa María de Gracia*, was the *capitana*, or flagship, owned by her master, Martín Boriol; the *caravel*, *San Antón*, seems to have been Cosa's contribution. At a guess, the flagship was between seventy and eighty *toneles* in burthen and around seventy feet in over-all length, and the *caravel* considerably less than that: small enough vessels in which to face the Tenebrous Sea, but perfectly adequate in the opinion of the men who sailed them. Pilots early learned to prefer *caravels* of under sixty *toneles* for the tricky work of exploration, and favored the diminutive *bergantines* for inshore reconnaissance.⁶ For that matter, ships which cannot have been much more than thirty-five feet over-all were sailed across the Atlantic without its causing remark, much less celebrity and civic receptions. Due allowance must be made for the superb seamanship of the times; nevertheless the stubby little *caravels* were swifter, more weatherly, and far handier than their appearance indicates.

A crew of twenty to twenty-five was about right for a fair-sized *caravel*, plus the officers: master, pilot, and boatswain. (The captain of a ship was not of its complement: he was someone named to general command for the duration of the voyage, and had no part in

her navigation.) Bastidas probably had forty-five to fifty men, from able seamen to cabin boys. In addition there were the Crown veedores, the *escribanos* or notary-clerks, the *escuderos*, at least one armador as supercargo, two or more priests, and an undetermined number of women. One would like to know more of these last, and about all the women who shipped for the Indies. They went with every armada, and were paid at the same rate as seamen, twelve *maravedies* a day; their duties, admittedly varied, included cooking, washing, and the like. They must have been sturdy, colorful creatures, these *bonnes à tout faire* who signed on for voyages to the unknown, yet they were taken so for granted that no more mention is made of them than of the cabin boys. All that is certain about those who went with Bastidas is that some of them got back safe—which, considering what happened to the armada, says a great deal for the resistance of the so-called weaker sex.

Contrary to common belief, Bastidas did not set out from Spain in October of 1500. On February 18, 1501, he was still in Seville, with Cosa and Boriol, registering a promissory note.⁷ However, the note must have been about the last piece of business before going to Cádiz (then the only port from which vessels might clear for the Indies), for the armada was away by the middle of March. Since it passed inspection promptly, we can be sure that it was presented in perfect order: seaworthy, new-rigged, cargo properly packed and stowed, crew as licensed, papers in order, and no contraband merchandise aboard for commerce in Hispaniola.⁸ Furthermore, at time of sailing every man who went with it was in a state of physical purification and spiritual grace. The last concerns of anyone bound for the Indies, after making a will, were (a) a purge, and (b) confession and communion, "because naturally the sea is very much kinder to empty stomachs than to the full ones of sinful men." What state they were in emotionally, as they watched their familiar world shrink and vanish behind them, can only be imagined, for it is a point skipped by contemporary accounts. It is safe to say that no one was entirely unmoved as the caravels, dressed with flags and streaming pennants, moved out of harbor and bowed to open water.

An Atlantic crossing was no longer, in 1501, an experiment; much of the dread and splendor of Columbus' first adventuring was gone.

Some of Bastidas' crew had been that way before and knew the islands that lie like an emerald necklace from Trinidad to Cuba; one pilot, Juan Rodríguez, had been at the discovery of Paria; another, Andrés Morales, had explored with the Admiral from 1493 to 1496; Juan de la Cosa had traced the coast as far as Coquibacoa and seen the Sierra Nevada towering to the sky. But no one had gone farther than Cosa; even the old hands could not have escaped feeling the exhilaration of a dangerous treasure hunt. One gathers that there was little thought of Cathay and the golden Orient, as when Columbus, discovering Cuba, "leaped ashore and asked the natives for Japan"; Bastidas' *asiento* listed an extraordinary variety of possible products, but there was no mention of silk and only a passing one of spices. It was, in spite of everything, a practical expedition, and speculation ran to native gold and pearls. These last seemed a sure hope; if they could be collected "by the bushel" near Paria and had been found by Cosa and Hojeda in Coquibacoa, doubtless the further coast also had its philoprogenitive oysters.

(Every informed person knew that tropical oysters, swimming about the sea in flocks under a queen-commander, were uncommonly responsive to the biological urge. Thus prompted, they made for the shore, there to mate with the dewes of heaven and bring forth "their children, which are pearls"—white pearls, offspring of the morning, and dark ones born of twilight. All oyster children were valuable, even the deformed ones—victims of prenatal shock—known as *aljófara*, for pearls are not only to delight the eye. They are a potent remedy for hemorrhage and heart diseases, and for other ills which resist more banal medicines; best of all, "they comfort the spirit.")

Bastidas followed the usual outbound course: down to the Canaries for fresh meat, cheese, water, and wood, and then straight across to the Antilles. Here he discovered Barbados, then uninhabited, which he named after the "Green Isle" of legend and dismissed without interest, leaving it to be discovered afresh long afterwards. At the end of April or in early May the armada fetched Coquibacoa—the Goajira Peninsula, which bounds the Gulf of Venezuela on the west—and came to anchor off Citurma. This was the jumping-off place, the end of the map and the beginning of discovery. Keeping close inshore and putting in to any likely haven, the armada felt its way west, south, and

southwest along the coast of what is now Colombia; past the soaring bastions of the Sierra Nevada and the long beaches of Salamanca to the "Big River,"⁸ down to the great bay which Bastidas christened Cartagena, and so by islands and mainland shore to the Gulf of Urabá and the Isthmus. Something of what this entailed can be gleaned from modern sailing directions for the coast, which are so studded with warnings that it is hard to see how any pilot, navigating by primitive instruments without charts or even a vague knowledge of local winds, currents, and soundings, could take his ship safe from cove to bay to river mouth in detailed survey. Bastidas and Cosa were thorough; it took them five months to cover a distance that later caravels, with favoring weather, sailed comfortably in a week or so.

Not much is known of those months. At Citurma the natives were friendly, and Bastidas was able to get some pearls, though owing to the Coquibacoan oysters' careless habit of lying open in the sun, their children were apt to be more tanned than was desirable. Here, too, one of the crew elected to stay in order to qualify as a "tongue" (interpreter); he was found, intact, thirteen months later by another expedition and taken to Hispaniola. At Gaira, near Santa Marta (where Bastidas was one day to be governor), there was some unpleasantness with the Indians; at the mouth of the Big River the ships were caught in a fearful storm, and were saved only by a masterly display of combined piety and seamanship. Zamba and Bohío del Gato,⁹ two small havens just beyond the river, were remarkable only for the hostility of their shave-pate Indians, whom the Spaniards dubbed *los coronados* (the tonsured)—a name which has caused some historians to note that they "wore large crowns."

At Cartagena, where in aftertimes Spain built the "Pearl of the Indies," the greatest fortified port in the Americas, the armada lay over for two or three weeks. The magnificent landlocked harbor was inviting, but the inhabitants were not. Nothing would bring them to terms, or even to the state of wary truce which mutually inimical tribes commonly established for purposes of commerce. Probably the frustrated expeditionaries, who had been tantalized for months by the sight of golden ornaments with which their owners refused to part, became in the end too pressing. Before the armada left (about the twentieth of August) there was brisk fighting, which was repeated in

the near-by Islands of San Bernardo and of Barú.¹⁰ Bastidas wrote off the natives of these places as hopelessly rebellious cannibals, and the report was confirmed by following captains. The result was a rather apologetic decree, in 1503, which excluded the Caribs of Cartagena and the islands from the antislaving edicts.

There was one exception to the general ill-humor. Somewhere beyond the Río Sinú the armada anchored in the mouth of a river, near a large village whose inhabitants went so far as to provide a handsome banquet. The liquid intake was considerable, and the natives were so mellowed that they readily exchanged their worked gold for Spanish knickknacks. Before the ships could sail, however, the effects of the feast wore off, and in a morning-after mood "the Indians repented, and asked for their gold, and brought back the gewgaws and things which they had received. And Bastidas, that they be not aroused, gave back the gold and returned what they had given him." The sweet reasonableness of this story is unfortunately marred by a final sentence. "When he left," the chronicler continues, "he seized certain Indians, whom he bartered in the land where he got the large amount of gold that he brought back." The scene of this subsequent deal, if it ever took place, was Urabá.

The province of Urabá, on the eastern side of the gulf that takes its name, presented no particular attractions as seen from the water—the only viewpoint Bastidas considered safe. Nevertheless the Spaniards were enchanted with it, for the Urabaes, though clearly resolved to contest a landing, were willing to trade. The arms-length barter yielded the expedition nearly 7500 pesos of wrought gold. Just what the haul meant in legal tender (23.75 carats fine) is impossible to say. The Indians nearly always alloyed their gold with copper, or with copper and silver, and the proportions of the alloy were variable. Presumably, since copper was much scarcer than gold (and correspondingly prized), the native smiths were not reckless with it. The alloy, or an object made from it, was called by the conquistadores *guanín*, a word they took from the name of certain flat ornaments common in Hispaniola and pluralized, Spanish fashion, to *guanines*. In time the term was narrowed to mean pieces assaying 14 carats or less. However, an admixture of copper was a minor defect in a glittering seventy-five-pound heap of guanines, particularly as they seemed

an earnest of greater riches somewhere near. If the otherwise scantily provided Urabae could use gold so casually, their natural supply must be enormous. This, at last, was discovery worth shouting about; small wonder that when the armada crossed to the western side of the Gulf, the still-dazzled expeditionaries found Darién an anticlimax.

No exact date can be put to the discovery of Darién, although it was probably in October of 1501. How long the expedition stayed, and what it did there, are points which must be left equally vague. Bastidas secured some native products—textiles, artifacts, a little gold, and a few pearls—but nothing to arouse remark after the barter in Urabá. Darién, like Balboa, made an inconspicuous entrance. One cannot blame the discoverers for failing to be impressed. The brief heyday of the Darién colony was a triumph of valor and dogged delusion over geographical fact, and it would have required clairvoyance rather than perception to foresee it. And Vasco Núñez de Balboa, that as yet unimportant young escudero, could never have guessed that on this unlikely stage he would play one of the great dramas of New World history.

The Indians of Darién were a milder people than those of the mainland coast, and they appear to have resigned themselves to the Spaniards after no more than a token resistance. Some of them embarked with the armada, presumably of their own volition, and were later left in Hispaniola. Casas tells of seeing them wandering about the streets of Santo Domingo, free, self-possessed, and naked save for a conical gadget which might be termed a fig leaf, but which a later observer described explicitly as an extinguisher. Bastidas had shown commendable restraint in respecting his guests' convenience: the extinguishers were made of gold. The amiable Darienes were evidently not without guile; they were quite as rich as the Urabae (whose mines were a figment of Spanish imagination), but the expeditionaries do not seem to have suspected it.

Ninety or a hundred miles northwest of the three rocky islets called the Farallones de Darién, at about Punta Portogandí, the armada turned back in forced retreat.¹¹ Castilian explorers were not easily discouraged by the malice of "sea and wind and evil people" specified in contemporary insurance policies, but they had no defense as yet against *broma*, the voracious shipworm which infests these waters.

Santa María and *San Antón* were found to be riddled with broma. Somehow Cosa got the wallowing craft to Jamaica and from there to Hispaniola—a notable feat on a largely uncharted course. Since Bastidas had no authorization to touch at Hispaniola, an attempt was made to patch up the ships at a little island offshore called Isla del Contramaestre (Boatswain's Island), followed by a forlorn one to continue the voyage. The armada lay over for a month at Cabo Canongía waiting for fine weather, put out again to sea, and was once more forced back by storms. Two months after landfall at Boatswain's Island, the spongy vessels quietly foundered in the Gulf of Xaraguá (Gonaïves), near what is now Port-au-Prince.¹²

It was about the end of February 1502 when the expeditionaries stood on the Haitian shore and watched their ships drown in shallow water, and Bastidas and Cosa did not reach Spain until the following September. The intervening months were not dull. There was first the seventy leagues overland to Santo Domingo, a route which four centuries later was still bad enough to be described as demanding "courage and determination on the part of the traveler," and in the course of which Bastidas mislaid one of the three detachments into which he had divided his company. And at the end of it there was more trouble. Official Santo Domingo was usually chilly toward explorers, and instead of being feted, Bastidas was first investigated and then tried for illicit entry and barter.

The charges against Bastidas were thin, but the *fiscal* (Crown prosecutor) embroidered them with art, apparently on the thesis that, having lost their ships out of sheer perversity, the entire company should have swum to Spain, or alternatively, have perished in perfect legality on the spot. The newly installed Governor of the Indies, Comendador Ovando, clearly rather embarrassed, upheld the *fiscal*, but sidestepped responsibility by remanding the case to the Royal Council in Spain.¹³ Some twenty-eight vessels of the great fleet that had brought the Governor and a crowd of new colonists were due to sail for home on July 1; Bastidas and Cosa were given passage on one of the smallest caravels, and their gold was sent with them under embargo.

Casas says that Columbus, who had appeared off Santo Domingo a few days before, bound for his fourth attempt to find the Grand

Khan and the Isles of Spice, sent a prophetic hurricane warning to the Governor, urging that the fleet lie over, and that his advice was ridiculed.¹⁴ However this may have been, the fleet put out as planned, and ran into an appalling storm off Puerto Rico. It was night; the flagship with its guiding beacon vanished in the screaming dark, and in a few hours all but seven of the ships were lost. That carrying Bastidas and Cosa outran the hurricane, and made port in Cádiz in September.

The sovereigns were in Madrid when they learned that Bastidas had returned and was being held in custody by the chief magistrate of Jerez de la Frontera. Conscious that this sort of thing was not calculated to further the cause of exploration, they ordered that he be set at liberty and sent, with Cosa, to join the Court at its next residence in Alcalá de Henares. It was also arranged that Bastidas should bring his gold with him, and put it on exhibition at all towns along the way. The journey, thus turned into a combined march of triumph and publicity campaign, may have taken a roundabout route; Bastidas and Cosa were not in Alcalá before February of 1503.

They were received with marked graciousness. Their expedition could not be called an unqualified success, but it was profitable despite the loss of the ships and the bulky cargo (mostly dyewood), it showed the enormous extent of the mainland, and it proved for the first time that the southern continent produced gold in quantity.¹⁵ The treasure brought from Urabá was not startling in itself; a shipment of gold from the recently discovered mines of Hispaniola which had gone to the bottom with the flagship had been twenty times as much. But viewed as a sample from a single village, it was stupendous. Commander and pilot were made much of, and each was granted a life pension of 50,000 maravedíes a year—with the canny stipulation that they would be payable from the future revenues from Urabá.

Both Bastidas and Cosa applied, separately, for permits to return to Urabá. Bastidas offered higher royalties and as titular discoverer had the prior claim, but he was politely sidetracked. This, as it turned out, was a blessing: Urabá was to be the ruin of many an ambitious captain. Bastidas had been impressed with the opportunities for a smart man of affairs in Hispaniola. Acquitted of all charges against him, he went back to Santo Domingo in the summer of 1504¹⁶ and settled

down to accumulate a fortune. Juan de la Cosa got his contract, and an additional prize in the form of a brevet as *alguacil mayor* (chief constable) of Urabá, a position which promised financial returns as well as moral satisfaction. Thereafter Urabá was to be the dominant factor in his life, and indeed in his death.

As for Vasco Núñez de Balboa, he seems to have remained in Hispaniola, sharing the obscurity of hundreds of other young soldiers of fortune who scraped a living in the colony. He may have served in the dreadful campaign against the Indians sponsored by Governor Ovando, for when the natives had been "pacified" (with graveyard completeness), he was allotted some land in the newly subdued area as one of the founding settlers of a post called Salvatierra de la Sabana. Salvatierra was situated on an island-sheltered curve of the southwest coast, where Aux Cayes is now, and boasted some fine open land, a vast number of palm trees, and twenty white settlers, whose chief resource was pigs.

Here, very bored, Vasco Núñez raised hogs and debts, with special emphasis on the latter. Perhaps a place in the country was as risky for the amateur farmer then as it is now, although since the pigs fattened spectacularly on the palm fruit, and bacon brought inflated prices, it should have been good business. It may be that Balboa caught the passion for prospecting, in which some colonists amassed riches and many others lost everything they had or could borrow. Whatever happened in the shadowy years before Darién was ready for him, it brought only a drab kind of failure. In 1509 Balboa was hanging about Santo Domingo, the prisoner-at-large of his creditors—eaten with longing to get away from the island and totally unaware that destiny robed in tragedy and glory was just around the corner.

III

THE gold mines of Urabá were believed in as firmly as if they had been surveyed and sampled. That they did not exist and that the treasure of the Urabae was the product of generations of barter with

the interior were ideas which received little or no attention, although Queen Isabel sensibly observed that the next people to go there should make every effort "to see the said mines with their own eyes." This was exactly what a number of aspirant captains wanted to do. Out of a varied and eager field three were awarded contracts: Cosa, Alonso de Hojeda, and Cristóbal Guerra, each of whom had already made two voyages to the mainland beyond Paria.

The terms of the *asientos* with Guerra and Cosa were apparently identical.¹ Hojeda was a special case. He had been named Governor of Coquibacoa in connection with an abortive attempt at colonization of his discoveries around the Gulf of Venezuela in 1502. The title had not been revoked, and was now extended to include Urabá, and his agreements with the Crown were drawn accordingly. All three captains were allowed calls and commerce in Santo Domingo, equal rights of barter anywhere except in Columbus' preserves, and unlimited exploration and trade beyond Darién, and all were required to build a fortified post in Urabá or other convenient spot as a base camp. No provision was made for the eventuality that they would trip each other in simultaneous operations along the richer bits of coast, or worse, find themselves in Urabá together, there to dot the lonely shore with Spanish forts in triplicate—a prospect filled with dynamite.²

Thus in the fullness of time three armadas set out for the golden Gulf, but the intensive exploitation of Urabá and Darién did not develop as scheduled. Hojeda, the most favored, the least organized, and the last to leave,³ got no farther than Hispaniola, where (he claimed) his expedition was scuttled by Governor Ovando. He had not done with Urabá, but it was to be five years before he managed to set foot in it. Guerra went as far as Cartagena, where his career was terminated by a poisoned arrow. Cosa alone reached the Gulf of Urabá, so fulfilling the Queen's prediction that he would know how to carry out the venture better than anyone else. What is more, he built a fort there, although the site, construction, and occupation of it were none of his choosing.

The Cosa voyage, a crowded saga which may have included the first navigation of the Orinoco, has been curiously neglected, and such mention as it has received in modern times is usually erroneous.⁴ It is hard to resist telling a story that comprises practically everything

that could happen to an armada of exploration, but this is not the place to treat it as it deserves, for only a part of it relates to Darién.

Cosa left Spain with four ships, two of them bergantines, in June of 1504. He was in Santo Domingo in August, when Columbus got there with the survivors from his fourth voyage. From Hispaniola he seems to have made for the Orinoco, and to have sailed up the river for a hundred and fifty leagues.⁵ Doubling back to the Caribbean, he set his course for Urabá. After various stops—for pearls, for dye-wood, and at an island chiefly remarkable for its “snakes and dragons”⁶—he was in Cartagena at the end of the year or early in 1505. Here he found Guerra’s armada, which had left Castile three or four months after him. Rich in loot, but depressed by sickness, short rations, and the death of their commander, the Guerra expeditionaries wanted to go home. This suited Cosa perfectly, especially as he was able to make a deal to ship his bulky cargo direct to Spain. The two expeditions made a joint slave raid (Cartagena now being “a place appointed for slaves”), and after giving the homebound fleet what food he could spare, Cosa went his way without lingering to see it sail. He touched at the Sinú and at Isla Fuerte, and a few days later rounded Caribana head and came to anchor off the village now called Nicoclí, in Urabá.

There is a rather pedestrian, but possibly correct, account of the initial incidents in Urabá in Oviedo’s chronicle: a fight on landing, with capture of the hamlet near the beach; a night march on the chief village, guided by a co-operative prisoner, followed by a surprise attack before which the Indians fled, and thirty-six pounds of booty in gold masks and *maracas*. But an earlier reporter told the story before it had time to cool, and with considerably more color:

Having landed, they found many huts from which many Indians came forth to meet them, to accept them and do them honor. And they say that one of these had already foretold how certain ships were about to come from the east, from a great king to them unknown, who would have them all as his servants, and that the strangers would be all endowed with perpetual life and adorned in their persons with various vestments. They say, that having seen our vessels, their king said: Here are the ships that I told you about X years ago. The which king came with a breastplate of solid gold

fastened on his chest by a golden chain, and a mask of gold, and on his feet four gold bells weighing a marco each; and with him came XX Indians all with gold masks on their faces, sounding golden rattles which weighed 30 marcos each one. And when they saw men from the island [of snakes and dragons] with [the Spaniards], they turned hostile and began to fight our men vigorously with poisoned arrows. There were about 5,000 of them; of our people 140 landed and in hand to hand combat cut to pieces about 700, one of our men being killed by an arrow; then they went to the huts and took the king alive and rattles, masks, bells and the armature to the amount of 800 marcos.⁷

All this has a fine, firsthand flavor, but someone (perhaps a copyist) was too free with his zeros. The Urabae could never have mustered five thousand warriors, and seven hundred fatalities would have wiped out the village down to the last infant in arms. Also, the eight hundred marcos (410 pounds avoirdupois) of gold seem to have been nearer eighty. Incidentally, it would be interesting to know what the interval between the chief's prediction and its consummation really was: not "*X years*," obviously, but ten periods of time, since the numeral would be unmistakable even without an interpreter. Ten moons would carry foresight to the edge of prophecy; ten suns (expressed by sweeps of the arm) would mean no more than an efficient grapevine.

The mellow light in which Juan de la Cosa is usually displayed is markedly absent from Oviedo's narrative. The chronicler goes out of his way to present the Biscayan as a kind of seagoing gangster, hustling from assault to assault and possibly—this was pure supposition—hiding a good part of his loot from the accountants. The expedition's activities in Darién were an instance in kind.

Cosa, says Oviedo, had learned about Darién from the Urabae, and crossed the Gulf determined on a raid. Leaving the larger ships hove-to near the Farallones, he edged into the tiny estuary with the bergantines and the lifeboats, landed his men, and marched on the chief's village. The landing had been made in the small hours of the morning; the village was reached at dawn and attacked forthwith. The unsuspecting Darienes were easily defeated and their "king" captured (though he managed to escape afterwards); the booty in worked gold came to some twenty pounds. If Oviedo is right, this disgraceful affair

was the first contact between Castilians and the inhabitants of the small valley where Balboa was to conduct his school for conquerors. It is not known what Cosa and his companions thought of the place, but some of them were to know it well in the days of the settlement, among them the pilot Martín de los Reyes, Juan de Ledesma the fleet alguacil, and the captain of the flagship, Juan de Quicedo.

Cosa must have learned, at Santo Domingo, enough about Columbus' latest discoveries to realize that they touched those he himself had made with Bastidas, and that he could not continue for long to dodge along the coast pouncing on native villages in the dawn. He might have chosen to build his fort in Darién, or to make at once for Hispaniola and home, but for an unforeseen check. A lifeboat manned by sailors of Guerra's armada turned up at the estuary with bad news and an appeal for help. Guerra's flagship had been wrecked just outside Cartagena Bay; one of her sister naos, commanded by a certain Monroy, had then separated from the others and come after Cosa, and was now aground in Urabá. Why Monroy had turned to follow Cosa is not clear; the impression is that he was like a lost dog whose uneasy affections have become fixed on a reassuring passer-by, but since the two remaining ships of the armada went safely to Castile there was no apparent reason why he should not have gone with them. In any case the Biscayan had no choice but to adopt the foundling. He returned to Urabá, only to find that the nao, rotten with broma, was past salvaging.

Misfortune was soon followed by disaster. Cosa's own two naos were found to be in equally hopeless case; the pumps could not keep out the seeping water, and both had to be beached. A fort was now essential, for there were more than two hundred men, and the bergantines and the ships' boats could not hold more than half that number. Making the best of a desperate business, the expeditionaries unloaded and dismantled the useless naos, fashioned temporary shelters from the sails, and set about raising the mud and timber walls of an enclosure complete with "a very fine tower." Thereafter life in the fort became a monotonous endurance test. Harassed by the Indians, the Spaniards ventured on only one major sortie, to pan for gold near a lake. Their prisoners tempted them with tales of a gold-rolling river beyond the mountains where "each man, for little that he exerted

himself, could gather ten marcos in a day," but they were in no condition to accept the bait. Before very long, they knew that in a matter of weeks they would be able to leave Urabá: the transportation problem was being rapidly solved by an epidemic fever.

At the end of three months only a hundred men were left alive. Ten stalwarts elected to stay and hold the fort, with rations and ammunition for a year—a fantastic gesture, but not unique; the Spanish conquest offers parallel examples of suicidal hardihood. The rest embarked, the more able-bodied in the bergantines, the seriously sick in the flagship's lifeboat (apparently on the bleakly realistic theory that, since most of them were doomed anyway, they might as well go in one of the more hazardous craft), and the overflow in a smaller boat. Ninety-six days after the stranding of the naos, the little flotilla put out to sea, bound for Hispaniola.

It was a long and dreadful voyage. In the end one bergantín, packed to the gunwales, brought forty-four men to harbor in Azúa, near Santo Domingo; some time afterward the bigger lifeboat, which had been swept north to Cuba, limped in with fifteen more survivors. By January or February of 1506 Cosa was once more in Castile. The battered expedition had clung grimly to its treasure—11,850 pesos of wrought gold and thirty-five pounds of good pearls⁸—through all the catastrophes that had beset it, which explains why all the known survivors preserved unimpaired their appetite for voyaging, and why the Gulf of Urabá continued to be so attractive in spite of its undeniable drawbacks.

Not everything can be verified about Cosa's voyage, but several statements made in connection with it can be proven untrue. The river up which the armada sailed was not the Atrato: the report stated clearly that it was 600 leagues from Urabá. In any case the Atrato could not be explored for 150 leagues, least of all by ship, since that distance would put the explorer considerably beyond its mountain source. Amerigo Vespucci did not accompany Cosa: he is fully accounted for in Spain except for a short period from the end of September 1505 to March 1506, when it is just possible that he made a quick trip to Hispaniola and that he and Cosa returned from Santo Domingo together.⁹ Cosa did not make another voyage to Urabá in 1507–1508, and much less two such voyages, in 1507 and 1508, one

or both with Vespucci: there is ample documentation of the presence of both Cosa and Vespucci in Castile during those years. It is true that toward the end of 1506 a plan was afoot to send them to the Gulf with an armada of eight ships and four hundred men, but it never took solid shape. For reasons which will be explained, expeditions of exploration and conquest were suspended until 1508. Urabá, where the token garrison and towered fort were soon erased, was left to its own primitive devices for four and a half years.

Had conditions in Castile been normal in the period following Cosa's return, colonization of the mainland would probably have been pushed at once. But conditions were anything but normal. From the end of 1504 until the autumn of 1507 the country was in a state of disturbed uncertainty, when the powers and even the identity of the ruler were matters of question.

On November 4, 1504, Isabel died, and the throne of Castile and the Indies passed to her daughter Juana, wife of Felipe "the Handsome," whose father was Emperor Maximilian of Germany. Unfortunately Juana was mentally unbalanced, and her husband—who both bewitched and ill-used her—lacked the qualities which enabled Fernando to function so effectively as king-consort. Isabel, miserably aware of these facts, had at the last disposed that, should Juana be judged incompetent, Fernando should rule on her behalf. In December the Cortes met and decided the succession, declaring (a) that Juana was legitimate Queen of Castile, (b) that she was incapable of ruling, and (c) that Fernando should govern for her as regent. This left Felipe hanging angrily in mid-air, egged on to retaliation by his friend Louis XII of France, by his illustrious parent, and by a number of disaffected Castilian nobles—all of whom had axes of their own to grind.

Faced with the prospect of unequal war, Fernando hit on a scheme to cut the ground from under the Hapsburg feet by an alliance with France, based on marriage with Louis' young niece, Germaine de Foix. The deal was one of his rare instances of political insensibility. He was frank to a fault as to his motives ("You, my son," he wrote to Felipe, "by delivering yourself over to France have obliged me to contract, much to my regret, a second marriage . . ."), but he does not seem

to have realized the resentment it would arouse in Castile. For the moment, however, it worked; in November, Felipe formally recognized Fernando as king-regent.

The Catholic King was not usually ingenuous, but he apparently believed in Felipe's good faith, for he urged him to bring Juana home: "Come, my son, come to receive my embrace." Felipe came, while Fernando was in Aragon with his bride, but he was not in search of paternal embraces. Still less was he concerned with establishing Juana's legal competence. The handsome Hapsburg entered his wife's realms with a full court and three thousand German infantrymen, to which he proceeded to add six thousand additional troops, recruited through the feudal lords who supported his cause. When he finally consented to an encounter with his father-in-law, it was to offer a choice of war or capitulation.¹⁰ Fernando chose the latter.

It is probable that Fernando never showed to better advantage than in this moment of defeat, when he contrived to preserve not only his dignity but his sense of humor. The young prince received him surrounded by mailed vassals and backed by an army alerted for action; Fernando, urbane and faintly ironic, with his unarmored attendants mounted on mules, made the apprehensive choreography of force look silly. Four days later he renounced the regency, although he succeeded in keeping the grand masterhips of the knightly orders as well as half the revenues from the Indies as willed to him by Isabel: in the circumstances, a notable feat of negotiation. Two months afterwards he sailed from Aragon for Naples.

Felipe's reign lasted less than seven weeks, which was enough to demonstrate that the idea of putting this brash young Teuton over Castile had not, after all, been very bright. When he died, on September 25, 1506, he was mourned only by the distraught Queen and a disconcerted clique of favorites—mostly Flemish imports. Juana, a figurehead sovereign, but the only one in sight, then cloistered herself in her apartments, from where she emerged just once to exercise, with staggering lucidity, her royal powers. This single assertion of authority was as unexpected and as devastating as an earthquake: she annulled all appointments made after her mother's death, reinstated all Isabel's advisors and officials, and referred all Crown business to her father, relapsing thereafter into mulish silence.

For three months the country was governed (not without difficulty) by a board of regents presided over by Archbishop Cisneros, Primate and Chancellor of Castile. The Cortes, which had approved the provisional government only until the end of the year, then allowed it to expire by default. Castile was left with a full complement of functionaries and no co-ordinating authority, a singular situation due largely to the conviction that Fernando would hurry back in answer to the summons sent him by Cisneros and other supporters. But Fernando (who would have made a superlative poker player) lingered in benevolent detachment in Italy, writing suave, uneager letters full of confidence in Castilian loyalty to the Queen.

Meanwhile, Fate dealt neatly into Fernando's hand, for times in Castile were bad. To the inevitable lawlessness and assorted conspiracies were added a near famine (crops had failed for the third consecutive year) and an appalling epidemic of plague. A sure, experienced ruler was needed, and instead there was Juana, who persisted in wandering about Castile with her husband's coffined corpse. By August of 1507, when Fernando judged the time ripe, he was able to re-enter the realms in the guise of a magnanimous monarch graciously acceding to popular demand. Heaven was evidently on the King's side, for his return coincided with the end of the plague and a bumper harvest.

While all this had been going on, exploration had been in abeyance. (The plan to send Cosa again to Urabá with Vespucci had originated with Cisneros, whose warrant to dispatch expeditions lapsed with the provisional government.) In November the King summoned four of his most eminent pilots to confer with him in Burgos on measures to further discovery and development in the new realms. Columbus had died in 1506; the four top men now chosen as consultants were Juan de la Cosa, Amerigo Vespucci, Vicente Yáñez Pinzón, and Juan Díaz de Solís. All were in the confidence of the royal officials, who had used them on various occasions as advisers and special agents, and who doubtless briefed them thoroughly before sending them off to Court. What with difficult communications and normal bureaucratic delay, it was February of 1508 before they were in Burgos—Cosa and Vespucci with a strongbox containing a remittance for the King of 6000 ducats, sent by the Casa de Contratación.

The conferences in Burgos were not only with the navigators, and some decisions taken at the time were probably reached in private sessions of Fernando and Fonseca: notably, the appointment of Columbus' son and heir, Diego Colón, to replace Governor Ovando in Hispaniola. Other measures bear the pilots' stamp. The office of pilot major was created and entrusted to Vespucci. Pinzón and Solís were authorized to look for the elusive westward passage to the Orient, and left the same year to explore west and north from Cape Gracias á Dios in Honduras. Cosa was given an important part in an ambitious plan for settlement and exploitation in Tierra Firme.

The new project for colonization of the mainland had been submitted by Diego de Nicuesa, a wealthy resident of Hispaniola, in his own name and that of Alonso de Hojeda. It divided the whole stretch of coast from western Venezuela to Cape Gracias á Dios into two immense gobernaciones; one, from Coquibacoa to the Gulf of Urabá inclusive, to be administered by Hojeda, and the other, from the Gulf to northern Honduras, by Nicuesa.¹¹

So far as Hojeda was concerned, title was already established; the rights granted to him in 1504 were essentially the same as those embodied in this latest contract, and his brevet as governor of Coquibacoa and Urabá had never been revoked. He could even advance a certain merit as second-run discoverer, because one of his ships had repeated Bastidas' course in 1502; and although the excursion had been made without his authorization, he was technically responsible for it. No one except Bastidas could better claim rights in the territory, and Bastidas had long since given up any thought of such action. (Cosa was not in the running, because with all his signal qualities he fell short on social position. He was not gubernatorial timber, and he knew it; the Biscayan sailed with Hojeda, partnered him, fought beside him, and financed him, but when he addressed him, he said "Sir.")

Nicuesa's grant was a horse of another color. It had no foundation in any previous achievement, and it was territory which had been discovered by Columbus with particular pride. The enchanted Admiral, exploring his personal Asia along the Central American coast on his fourth voyage, had decided that Veragua, on the Isthmus between Chiriquí Lagoon and the Río Chagres, was really the Golden Chersonese, and that in the mountains near by must lie Aurea, site of

King Solomon's mines. The six hundred and sixty-six hundredweight of gold sent to Jerusalem in a single shipment, the three thousand hundredweight willed by King David to Solomon, had all come from Aurea—Josephus said so. "I esteem the commerce of this port and the mines of this land," Columbus had concluded, "far more than all that has been done in the Indies." One can understand why Fernando wanted to serve notice that this prize was outside Diego Colón's inheritance, but not why he thought that Colón would carry out his instructions to give every assistance to the interloping concessionaire.

Approved in principle early in May, the concessions were set forth in a double contract which was signed and sealed on June 9, 1508. The *capitulaciones* were much more comprehensive than any previously drawn, and contained the stipulation that Juan de la Cosa should be Hojeda's associate and lieutenant-governor, while retaining his rank of alguacil mayor.

When Fernando put his hand to the document to sign, "I, the King," he started a train of events which did, at last, produce a colony in Tierra Firme. It is possible, however, that both he and the Governors of Urabá and Veragua would have torn up the contract had they foreseen that the net result of eighteen months' preparation, two armadas, seven or eight million maravedíes' investment, and nearly eight hundred lives, was to be the settlement in Darién.

IV

THE concessions of Urabá and Veragua were to run for four years, reckoned from the date of disembarcation. Each Governor was required to build two forts, of which one had to be completed within a year and a half—solid structures capable of insuring the safety of their settlements. This was almost the only obligation imposed by the contract, aside from the limitations, controls, and royalties to which all expeditions were subject. The quinto on trade and barter was to be one fifth the first year and one fourth thereafter, calculated on the gross proceeds; that on mines (the rights to which were, for some

reason, conceded for ten years) was one tenth the first year, one ninth the next, and so on to a flat fifth for the last five years.¹ Colonists would earn title to the lands allotted them and could sell them at expiration of the contract; they would be exempt from taxes except on products sold and would enjoy the same privileges as the residents of Hispaniola.

No limit was put on the number of men who could be enlisted, save for an elite to be recruited in Hispaniola. This was restricted to six hundred, and was to be composed of propertied settlers who would be permitted to keep their land, mines, Indians, and rights in the island colony while absent in Tierra Firme. It was hoped that these desirably solvent and experienced recruits, tempted by the double indemnity, would do much to guarantee the success of the new ventures. The King promised to pay passage with forty days' food for two hundred men from Spain, and passage with fifteen days' food for six hundred from Hispaniola, and to supply each man with light armor. He also agreed to provide for each fort four small cannon, twenty hand guns, iron shot, and a thousand pounds of powder.

The Governors could take forty slaves from Spain, and might capture as many more as they liked in Cartagena and the adjacent islands, paying royalties on them "as on any other merchandise"; they could take four hundred Indians from the islands near Hispaniola (by unspecified methods of persuasion) and forty expert native miners from Hispaniola itself. They were also allowed, by special decree, twenty-six mares and, in the course of their four-year contract, could import twenty stallions—a rare item, because the government of Castile was engaged in an intensive effort to increase breeding in the home realms. Finally, they were assigned Jamaica as a supply island, with the obligation to build there another fortified post.

The *asiento* was excellent from the point of view of the concessionaires, and sufficiently inviting from that of pioneers who wanted to get in on the ground floor of promising colonies. As seen by "the Young Admiral," Diego Colón, it was infuriating from first to last.

Colón, who had inherited his father's red hair and pigheadedness without his genius, cherished in his tight little soul the ambition to re-establish for himself the fabulous privileges once granted to Co-

lumbus—together with such amplifications and additions as his fertile fancy dictated. In Columbus, avidity had been strongly tinged with mysticism: the Indies were Galatea to his Pygmalion, and the explorers who followed him were violators not so much of a discovery as of an invention, patented on earth but expressly inspired by heaven. Diego was more practical, but not less determined, and the astounding insolence with which he expressed his claims would have shocked his father immeasurably. In 1508 he started suit against the Crown, demanding effective instauration as "Viceroy and perpetual Governor of the islands and mainland, both discovered and yet to be discovered, west of the line which passes 100 leagues beyond the Cape Verde Islands." The demand (which ignored the Treaty of Tordesillas in favor of the Pope's first bull) was elaborated to give him absolute jurisdiction and the maximum financial return—a return which Columbus had estimated at about twenty-five per cent of the net proceeds from all sources, including commerce, anywhere in the New World.

Obviously any monarch would have been insane to accede to such pretensions, and should have been deposed at once had he done so. It was also clear that Fernando was under no compulsion to send young Diego to Hispaniola: he could have abrogated the decree of privileges on the ground that it was inimical to the national interest, or he could have used a rather obvious legal loophole to declare that only the rank of admiral was hereditary. Colón, however, ignored the obvious. He sailed for Hispaniola without gratitude, determined—explicit instructions to the contrary—to hinder to the utmost the Governors whose concessions in *Tierra Firme* were symbols of the limits set to his power and profit.²

The armadas for Urabá and Veragua were scheduled to sail in March of 1509. They did rather well to get away only six months late. Judging from the records which have been preserved of expeditions of the period, any captain who had gone through the business of assembling, financing, manning, and supplying a fleet must have sailed to face cannibals and hurricanes with a sigh of relief. Cosa, it is true, had time to spare, but his armada was almost painfully modest compared to that of Nicuesa. He spent the interval on a mission for the Casa, fetching from Portugal two vessels bought for official use in

Hispaniola, where the violent hurricane of 1507 had destroyed most of the ships based at the colony.

Nicuesa, who had both money and credit, said that he laid out nearly five and a half million maravedies on his expedition. How many ships he armed is an open question—his contemporaries credit him, variously, with five, seven, or twelve—but the most reliable information seems to be that he took six from Spain and added a seventh in Hispaniola. The Hojeda-Cosa armada is generally said to have left with a caravel and two bergantines, but quite possibly was limited to the bergantines; it acquired another caravel in Santo Domingo.

The combined fleet, accompanied by the two Portuguese caravels destined for service in Hispaniola, sailed from San Lúcar de Barrameda about September 9, 1509, and from Cádiz, where the fleet had to pass inspection, a few days later. The date of arrival in Santo Domingo is not known, but Nicuesa, at least, could not have been there before November. Six weeks, including the usual stop at the Canaries, was considered good time for the outward voyage, and Nicuesa paused to shanghai a hundred and fifty slaves on the island of Santa Cruz (St. Croix), and stopped again in Puerto Rico to sell some of them. This was a mistake; Santa Cruz was not appointed for slaves, as Diego Colón was delighted to point out, and Nicuesa was charged with illegal raiding, denounced to the King, and forced to relinquish his captives.

Alonso de Hojeda and Diego de Nicuesa may have been firm friends at the time they negotiated their agreement for the twin concessions, but in Santo Domingo, when both were struggling to complete their armadas, they were like rival fighting cocks. In some ways they were extraordinarily alike. Both came from the solid second-line nobility, and had been pages and squires to grandees of the bluest blood; both had gone to the Indies to make the fortunes they lacked at home. The difference in their ages was slight, and they were both under middle height, muscular, and singularly handsome. With this, however, the resemblance ceased.

Hojeda, in whom "all bodily perfections that a man may have seemed joined, save only that he was small," was as valiant, enterprising, and unsuccessful a conquistador as ever swaggered through the Indies. Fighting had been his business, and he was as perfectly con-

structed for it as a pocket dreadnought, while his grace and prowess in the furious sports of the times were famed in Castile as in the New World. Inevitably he made enemies, but his friends were both eminent and loyal; the King thought highly of him, and he had even won the armored heart of Bishop Fonseca. Hojeda had captained three unprofitable expeditions: in 1499, with Cosa, when in six weeks or so he sailed from Surinam to the Goajira Peninsula rapidly bracketing Columbus' Paria discoveries and himself discovering from Isla Margarita to Citurma, and then spent five months hanging about the headquarters of the anti-Columbus faction in Hispaniola;³ in 1502, when he attempted to colonize in Coquibacoa, and in 1505, when, bound for Urabá, he was held up in Santo Domingo by Ovando.

The first of these voyages was quite evidently undertaken primarily in order to check on the Admiral, of whom alarming reports had been received in Castile. The second ended with Hojeda a prisoner of his mutinous partners, of whose trumped-up charges he was convicted in Hispaniola and acquitted on appeal by the Royal Council. With regard to the third, he brought suit for damages against Ovando: "on one count for 30,000 *castellanos* and on another for 4000 ducats and on another for 500,000 *castellanos*, which he says he failed to make and spent because the said Ovando did not allow him to make a certain voyage."⁴ These tidy sums, which added up to about 240,000,000 maravedíes, would have made up very nicely for Hojeda's disappointments—had he been able to get them.⁵

Diego de Nicuesa was quite as ornamental as Hojeda ("one of the handsomest men in Castile"), and almost equally skilled in jousting and fencing; he had a pretty talent for ballad-singing to his own guitar accompaniment, and he liked to show off his excellent horsemanship on a fine mare. He also had considerable business acumen behind his fashionable façade; starting from scratch, he had become in only six years one of the richest men in Hispaniola. But he had had none of the grim preparation for his new undertaking that years of struggle and frontier leadership conferred.⁶

With Diego Colón in the saddle in Hispaniola, the two Governors-elect found final organization of their armadas to be a day-to-day battle against official opposition. Their every move was hampered; their creditors were encouraged to be difficult; worst of all, they were

not allowed to enlist the six hundred self-financing, seasoned colonists on whom they had counted. Moreover the Young Admiral appointed a lieutenant of his own to take over in Jamaica—one Juan de Esquivel, a caballero of whom Casas has some gruesome tales. After a few weeks of this humiliating obstacle race, Hojeda and Nicuesa were raw-nerved and truculent. Hojeda, meeting Esquivel in the street, threatened to have his head if he occupied the supply island; Esquivel shrugged it off, and remembered. Before long the two Governors were snarling at each other over the money given to Nicuesa from the royal treasury for the keep of the men in both armadas, over procurement of a certain caravel which both of them wanted, over the division of the two hundred men brought from Spain, of whom Nicuesa had taken a hundred and fifty, over getting hold of the best volunteers from Hispaniola. When Nicuesa demanded that the Gulf of Urabá be included in his gobernación, a duel was narrowly avoided.

Juan de la Cosa managed to prevent an open break by getting the bristling contentents to recognize the Atrato River as their common boundary. It was Hojeda who made the concession; his title covered the Gulf of Urabá, and by compromising he gave up Darién. Seven months later King Fernando, informed of the controversy, confirmed Hojeda's right to the whole Gulf. His *cédula* was important, although, by the time it reached the Indies, events in Tierra Firme had gone far beyond proper little decrees and council resolutions.

Although relatively few of the six or seven hundred men who signed on in Hispaniola could contribute more than their persons to the undertakings, almost all of them were *baquianos*. A baquiano was the opposite of a *chapelón*, or tenderfoot, and worth ten times as much in a pioneering venture; chapelones were a trial and a danger, and were apt to die before they learned to be useful. And Nicuesa, at least, had several officers who were financially useful. His lieutenant governor, Lope de Olano, a Biscayan who had once belonged to the anti-Columbus faction in Hispaniola, was both baquiano and a man of substance (in 1503 he had been guarantor for Bastidas); the *alcalde mayor*, or chief justice, was Alonso Núñez, ex-councilor of the city of Madrid; Juan de Ledesma, who had backed both Bastidas and Cosa and been alguacil of Cosa's armada of 1504–1506, appears to have paid for a caravel, bought in Nicuesa's name, of which he was master.

Hojeda and Cosa, whose armada and prospects were less brilliant, did not do so well in the way of investing colonists. Juan de Quicedo, who had been appointed chief royal veedor for both gobernaciones, may have been of some assistance; as Cosa's flag captain four years before, he had proof that Urabá could pay well. His only known contribution, however, was a third interest in a small caravel owned jointly with Cosa and a certain Pedro Martínez, notary of gold and smelting for Tierra Firme, which the three had permission to keep in Tierra Firme for their private use and profit. This little caravel, and Quicedo with it, may have stayed in Santo Domingo for some months after the armadas left for Tierra Firme. Hojeda got another in Hispaniola—snatching it from under the nose of Nicuesa, who also wanted it—and so far as can be ascertained he had only three ships, a caravel and two bergantines, when he went to Urabá.

Each Governor secured in Santo Domingo one special partner who was willing to put capital into the enterprise for a proportionate share in the profits. Nicuesa's man was Rodrigo de Colmenares, an hidalgo of some education and, it developed, few scruples; Hojeda contracted a clever lawyer named Martín Fernández de Enciso, who was given the office of *alcalde mayor*. These last-minute adjutants were to join their respective commanders as soon as they could assemble more ships and men. Both of them were to have far more to do with the colonization of Tierra Firme than either of the concessionaires.

By some miracle of energy and determination the expeditions were ready to clear from Hispaniola early in December. Hojeda and Cosa completed their arrangements (including the settling of Cosa's wife and family in Santo Domingo) a little before Nicuesa, and sailed on or about December thirteenth,⁷ setting their course for Cartagena. Into the caravel and two small craft they had fitted two hundred and twenty men, the assorted supplies for the colony, a number of live pigs and chickens, and twelve brood mares. Thus equipped, they planned to subjugate a savage and reluctant land of indefinite extent and incalculable hazards.

The departure of the Veragua armada, achieved with considerable difficulty, took place eight or ten days later. Nicuesa spent the interval in a frantic serial effort to appease creditors egged on by Colón; the last summons was served when he was actually aboard, with the bulk

of his fleet already away. A kindly friend stood surety (at which Nicuesa burst into sobs of relief) and the Governor of Veragua literally ran to his waiting bergantín, "looking over his shoulder to see if any other writ of attachment were following him." Partly from reaction, his attitude once he had boarded his flagship was so crassly dictatorial that most of his officers and pilots—who had forgotten more about exploration than Nicuesa ever knew—were alienated at the outset.

The Governors left behind two volunteers who had been eager to accompany them. One, prevented by an injury to his knee, was Hernán Cortés, who had wanted to go with Hojeda. The other, who was not permitted to leave because he could not first settle his debts, was Vasco Núñez de Balboa.

Nicuesa followed Hojeda's course, bent on collecting some slaves in the designated zone and on underlining his claim to Darién by entering his gobernación from the Gulf of Urabá. He reached Cartagena just in time to be of assistance to Hojeda and just too late to save Juan de la Cosa.

Hojeda and Cosa had made Cartagena on the fifth day out. Tempted by the harbor, the easy-seeming country, and the recollection of Guerra's enormous loot, the Governor wanted to establish there his first fort and settlement; Cosa was all for going first to colonize in Urabá, "where the people are not so ferocious and have not such bad poison." Hojeda insisted on his idea, and a first raid on the villages close by, which netted sixty captives, only whetted his appetite. When he gave the order to march with seventy men on Turbaco, a village of a hundred *bohíos* ten or twelve miles distant, Cosa protested, but elected to go with his chief. This gallantry was unfortunate; like so much spontaneous heroism, it was noble in intent and disastrous in its results.

Forewarned, the Indians left the village, only to return and fall on the invaders as they scattered to look for treasure. After prolonged fighting Hojeda charged through the thick of the attackers and escaped, "flying as if on wings." Cosa, stubbornly covering for his captain, was killed. As he lay dying from innumerable poisoned wounds, he saw one Spaniard still alive and manfully defending them both, ". . . and

he said to him, 'Brother, since God has preserved us until now, put forth your strength and save yourself, and tell Hojeda how you left me at the end.' And this man alone, we believe, escaped out of them all, he and Hojeda."

Search parties from the ships found Hojeda crouched in a mangrove swamp, his sword still in his hand and on his shield the marks of three hundred arrows. Told that Nicuesa had arrived, he at first refused to come out, sure that his rival would rejoice in his humiliation. In this he miscalculated; he had not considered the exquisite satisfaction to be had from conscious—and public—magnanimity to a fallen adversary. As a matter of fact, Nicuesa behaved beautifully. As described by Casas the meeting of the two Governors on Codega beach had the mannered grace of a minuet and the elegant wordiness of eighteenth-century drama. They advanced on one another, embraced, shed some appropriate tears, and immediately burst into long speeches in which the most elevated sentiments bloomed in ordered, if somewhat ungrammatical, luxuriance.

"There must be a great difference," declared Nicuesa, his feet planted in the sand as on an invisible platform, "between the treatment gentlemen accord each other when they see he whom they once disliked in need of help, from that of when they were quarreling and had the faculty to revenge themselves. Because besides being baseness and vileness of heart and a degeneration from the virtues of his ancestors," he continued, warming to his theme in a welter of syntax, "it would be cruelty, and a deed of men without reason, to afflict those whom affliction has already plunged into anguish . . ." and so on.

The upshot of all this eloquence was a joint punitive expedition four hundred strong, led by Hojeda and Nicuesa on their mares. Marching by night, they assaulted Turbaco before dawn; alarmed macaws screamed a warning from the trees, but the Indians had no time to escape. "By ten o'clock in the morning, there was not in the whole town one Indian alive, large or small." Hunting for loot, the soldiers found Juan de la Cosa. His body was tied to a tree, so horribly bloated and contorted that even the case-hardened *compañeros* could not bear to look at it, and "as full of arrows as a hedgehog."^a

Nicuesa refused to wait to bury Cosa, and without pause for food or rest the men were marched back to the coast. The two Governors

said good-by at the shore, and made haste to leave Cartagena and its bloody memories. Casas heard that Nicuesa's share of the loot came to 7000 pesos; Oviedo, always Nicuesa's champion, says that he nobly declined to accept so much as a peso; Martyr, perhaps the best informed on this point, states that there was very little loot to divide, and that of poor quality.

The depleted Hojeda expedition made for Urabá. A week or so later, after a brief stop at Isla Fuerte, it rounded Caribana head and came to anchor just inside the Gulf. The banner of Castile and Leon was raised on a low hill above the beach, at or near the spot where Cosa had camped in 1505, and the post was named San Sebastián de Urabá. The day of the arrow-martyred saint falls on January twentieth, and according to Spanish custom, this should be taken as the approximate date of the landing. It is possible, however, that another reason for honoring St. Sebastian was the hope that he would have a protective feeling for Christians exposed to perils with which he was peculiarly able to sympathize.

Shortly afterwards Hojeda sent the caravel back to Hispaniola with some gold and slaves to pay for more supplies and with a letter for a ship-owning friend of Haniguayana named Bernardino de Talavera, urging him to come to Urabá with provisions and volunteers. This caravel presents a minor problem. She apparently arrived, for Talavera went to join Hojeda, in such fashion as to achieve permanent notoriety: Having sold his ship just before receiving the letter, he first tried to get her back (allegedly, by simple seizure) and when this failed, stole a nao which was loading in Salvatierra in which he made off with seventy companions for San Sebastián. Furthermore, the caravel from Urabá seems to have carried the news of Cosa's death—but to whom, it is impossible to say.

Colón asserted that no news whatever was received in Hispaniola from either Hojeda or Nicuesa from the time they left for their gobernaciones until after February of 1511. As late as June of 1511, Fernando was anxiously lamenting, to Colón and to the Governors themselves, this alarming silence. Yet somehow the King had learned that Cosa was dead, and had ordered certain payments made to the widow. One can only conclude that the caravel, if she did arrive, took no official correspondence of any kind, and, still more remarkably,

that her entire crew contrived to maintain a clamlike secrecy about their experiences.

Back in Urabá, the hundred and forty remaining colonists built a stout timber "tower" and thirty huts for dwellings, relatively cheerful in the belief that Enciso would soon be there with his supplementary armada. But as the weeks passed with no sign of him, the situation became rapidly worse. It was found impossible to live off the country; the Indians rallied to defend their fields, and raids proved both costly and ineffectual. A crocodile ate one of the precious mares, thus destroying half the value of the others by demonstrating to the natives that the strange monsters were vulnerable. Disease was rife. By May, food rations had been cut to almost nothing. Men died raving of hunger, of fever, and of poisoned arrows, and those who buried them were envious, "because they thought that with death they could be at rest."

At some time during these months Alonso de Hojeda came nearer death than ever in all his years of perilous adventuring. (Gossip said that an outraged husband was at the bottom of it; Hojeda had an enterprising way with native women.) The Urabae provoked a sortie, and as usual Don Alonso led the charge, "running like the wind," exactly as the Indians had foreseen. At the first thicket four bowmen in ambush let fly their arrows, piercing his thigh from side to side. Carried back to the fort, he showed the mettle that made him something of a legend in his time: he ordered his surgeon, Alonso de Santiago, to apply white-hot irons to his wounds. Maestre Alonso refused, protesting that "with such firing I would kill you," and Hojeda turned on him furiously:

"Be that as it may," he said with deadly force, "I solemnly swear to God that if you do not do as I say, I will command that you be hanged."

The surgeon reconsidered. Disdaining to be bound or held, the little Governor lay without a whimper while the flesh was charred deep on either side of his leg. He recovered.

Early in May, a *nao* stood in from sea and came to anchor below the camp.⁹ Talavera had come, and "joy was indescribable and incalculable" over his cargo of bacon and cassava. The *compañeros* were in no mood to care, if they ever knew, how the meat and flour, or

even the nao, had been procured. The crew of the Stolen Ship, for their part, were rather less uplifted. Urabá was considerably less attractive than it had appeared from a distance, and before long they decided that the rigors of the law in Hispaniola were to be preferred to the hardships of San Sebastián. When they left, the Governor went with them.

Hojeda intended to make a quick trip to Hispaniola for supplies and fresh recruits. The *compañeros*, who from sheer misery had been ripe for mutiny, approved the plan; they agreed to remain for fifty days in San Sebastián in hope of relief, and for his part the Governor gave them written permission to go where they chose without further obligation if no help had come when the time was up. The most forceful of the surviving colonists was named lieutenant—Francisco Pizarro, the illiterate soldier from Estremadura who was to be one day the conqueror of Peru.

Seven weeks was a short time for all that Hojeda proposed to accomplish—so short that one wonders if he really believed he could carry it out. He probably hoped that Enciso would arrive to save the situation; at all events, when the due date came he was fighting a way with his shipwrecked companions through the treacherous swamps along the coast of Cuba, and he did not reach Hispaniola until late March, or more likely April, of the following year. But seven weeks was an aeon to hold out in San Sebastián. When they had passed, only eighty Spaniards were left alive, and late in July, or early in August, Pizarro gave the order to abandon the fort. They still had the two bergantines; Pizarro and forty-one others went in one ship, and though they would have despaired to know it, they were to find themselves back in Darién before two months were gone. The thirty-eight men and two women who went in the other bergantín, in charge of a certain Valenzuela, were more unfortunate. Their vessel was not, as Casas states, capsized in a cross sea by “a whale or other large fish” with the loss of all on board, but their end was almost equally disastrous. Swept by wind and current, the ship had fetched up on the coast of Cuba. Nine men had died on the way, and the remaining voyagers had fallen victim to the Indians in battle or in slavery. Three years later Velásquez found the only survivors, in servitude to a chief not far from the place where Havana was founded: two women and a

sailor named García Mejía. Perhaps the women, one of whom was rather well on in years, concluded that their sufferings were not vain, for they were immediately supplied with the essentials for their rehabilitation—clothes and, much more important, husbands.¹⁰

On September seventeenth or eighteenth, Pizarro and his companions were beating up the coast just past Cartagena when their tired eyes fell on what must have seemed the most beautiful sight this side heaven: the sails of Enciso's ships, five days out from Santo Domingo, bearing down from the northeast. Overjoyed at the prospect of getting the food and help which would enable them to continue their voyage with good chance of making Hispaniola safely, they put about and followed the two vessels into Cartagena harbor. As it turned out, their joy was premature. They knew the horrors of Urabá, which they presumed forever behind them; they knew the terms of Hojeda's final dispositions, and that they were now free of obligation to the concession and its governor. But they did not yet know the *bachiller* Enciso.

V

THE armada of the *bachiller* Enciso, a *nao* and a *bergantín*, had sailed from Santo Domingo on September 13, 1510, with a hundred and fifty-two new settlers for Urabá. One hundred and fifty of these were regularly enlisted recruits, duly registered and approved. The remaining two, even the lesser of whom was to accomplish much more in the way of practical conquest than the *bachiller* himself, were Vasco Núñez de Balboa and his yellow dog, Leoncico.

The ships were well out at sea before Enciso was aware of the two irregulars, for the sufficient reason that until then they had been hidden from creditors, bailiffs, and other impediments to embarkation in a cask originally designed to carry flour. A less picturesque getaway, such as walking on board to say good-by to someone and then failing to walk off again, had not been possible: Colón had the ships under close surveillance against just such eventualities, and Enciso was almost equally alert for fear some legal infraction would be seized on

as an excuse to keep him in Hispaniola. The flour cask was an inspired solution. Helped by a friend among the recruits named Bartolomé Hurtado, Vasco Núñez was able to fool the local authorities and the bachiller in relative comfort.¹

The departure was as significant for him as a new birth, and almost equally bare of material equipment. Aside from Leoncico (whose subsequent career removes him from the category of mere possessions) Balboa had nothing but the clothes he wore and his sword—a situation saved from routine success-story drama by the picaresque comedy of the moment. Plenty of great men have begun penniless, some of them fairly late in life, but none, perhaps, have taken off for immortal glory in a barrel. What he thought, as he crouched in the dark with his dog between his knees, no one can say. He could follow the process of sailing by ear—the scrape of lighters against the wales, the creak of windlasses, shouts and curses and laughter and long-accented chants. A swing and strain told when sail was half set, a steady whisper marked by the beat of sweeps meant that the vessel was moving out of the river under the grim walls of El Homenaje; the noises as canvas was full set, the shock of meeting open water, and the first free tremor of the leaning hull said when the ship was away. Balboa may have spent the hours before he felt safe in showing himself, worrying over the approaching interview with the bachiller, but judging from what one learns of his character in the years which followed, it is probable that he simply went to sleep.

Had Enciso been of another stamp, Vasco Núñez would doubtless have got off fairly easily. The bachiller, however, was an almost ludicrously self-important martinet in the first flush of command. When the government cutter sent to see the armada on its way had turned back, Balboa emerged prepared for a chilly reception and the likelihood of some disciplinary medicine, but he must have been surprised at the fury which met him on the quarter-deck. Enciso had been *burlado*, and to be touched by ridicule, or even by the ridiculous, was unbearable. He lashed out in a tirade wherein he so far forgot his judicial position and training as to declare that Balboa had earned the death penalty, and would be left to perish on the first desert island.

It was a highly pictorial scene: the raging alcalde, Balboa standing blond and tall with his dog beside him, the grouped officers, and

on the deck below the men crowding close to listen; a scene bright with color under the arching sails and the cobalt-and-pearl of the Caribbean sky. It is doubtful, however, if anyone noticed the setting; what interested the recruits was to see how their commander met his first test. All things considered, he could hardly have done worse. The men heard him without approval, and some of them boldly spoke out on behalf of the stowaway, arguing that a superlative fighting man with years of experience in the Indies was an asset to be valued. They may have added that Leoncico was also a desirable addition to the force; trained war dogs were hard to come by, and was not he the worthy son of Becerillo, Ponce de León's wonder dog? (Later, when Leoncico was drawing crossbowman's pay, no one questioned that he earned it several times over.)²

Enciso saw the force of these arguments, and besides, there were no desert islands immediately handy. He yielded, but he did so as unpleasantly as possible. His conduct of the incident achieved the effects which might have been expected; the first seeds of dissatisfaction were planted in the *compañeros*, and Balboa, whom he now detested, was raised from insignificance to something resembling a popular hero. Nor was his next recorded initiative calculated to improve his position. Reaching Cartagena still in evil humor, he proceeded to mishandle Pizarro and the other survivors of San Sebastián with what, in the circumstances, was almost perverse stupidity.

Enciso's first reaction to the bitter story told by Pizarro and his crew was to accuse them of lying and threaten to put them in irons as deserters or worse; his second, after reading Hojeda's instructions, was to refuse to honor the release and to order them back to Urabá. Protesting as one man, the unhappy refugees begged to be allowed to go to Hispaniola, or at very least to Veragua; as a last resort, they even offered their gold as the price of liberty. It was all useless. Enciso merely replied that he was now acting head of the *gobernación*, and that as such his commands were final.

At first glance it seems odd that anyone should go to such lengths to saddle himself with a group of worn-out, resentful subordinates. But Enciso had his reasons. If he could carry on in Urabá, his share of the take would be much more than had been envisaged when there were a hundred and eighty more people among whom to divide the

spoils, and he might be able to make his pretension of deputy governor stick, thus stepping into Hojeda's shoes—a beautiful thought. He wanted all the men he could get, particularly seasoned recruits who knew the ground. On the other hand, it would have been dangerous to allow the offended colonists to carry tales of him to Santo Domingo. Quite apart from the fertile inventiveness of Spaniards bent on defamation, his right to take over leadership in the concession was too thin to withstand the pressure for which Colón would have been charmed to find an excuse. Enciso was not Hojeda's deputy; he was only the chief justice of a no-longer-existing colony by appointment from a no-longer-functioning governor. His position was that of an impressive equestrian statue from which someone has removed the horse.

The armada lay over in Cartagena to repair a lifeboat. The job took three days, during which the work party was surrounded by a silent throng of watchful Indians. The Spaniards, also silent, pretended not to notice their audience, but they probably established a record for speed which few carpenter's gangs have equaled. On the third day of this rather morose pantomime, the alarm was given that ten natives were menacing two workmen who had gone for water. The bachiller's anemic rise to this minor emergency argued ill for future crises. He "left the ship with many armed men, advancing little by little towards the Indians with great fear of the poisoned arrows." The men of Urabá must have remembered Hojeda, running like the wind before his soldiers. However, it was just as well that Enciso was not precipitate; the Indians turned out to be friendly and by the time he approached on his slow-motion charge, the Caribs and the carpenters were on the best of terms. Enciso subsequently took great credit for his skill in winning native good will, but the whole story seems a little odd, and one wonders how he acquired "the Indian girl I captured in Cartagena," who, he said, claimed to have accounted for eight Christians with her own bow.

On one of the last days of September the armada sighted the low hills of Urabá. The dismal forebodings of the returning colonists were realized even sooner than they expected: rounding the point into the Gulf the flagship went aground on the inshore shoals, and immediately broke up under the combined action "of wind, waves, tide and undertow." Most of the men reached shore, although they were "nearly all

naked"—presumably because they had stripped in order to swim better. The total salvage from the flagship amounted to seventy or eighty swords, twelve barrels of damaged flour, a few cheeses, and a little soggy hardtack. To complete the desolation, the Urabae had burned the fort and the thirty shacks. The familiar story began over again: a stranded Spanish force, hostile natives, famine, fever, desperation.

Enciso was quite unequal to handling the seamy side of conquest. His life in the Indies had been civilian, for it was perfectly possible for a prominent lawyer to reside in Santo Domingo in his time without encountering anything more martial than a courtroom brawl, and—with the income the bachiller said he earned—to do so in considerable comfort. When he did gird himself to lead a hundred ill-armed compañeros on a foraging raid the party was ignominiously routed, "not by 1000 or 2000 men armed with arquebuses and other artillery, but by only three naked Indians." The colonists, forlornly camped among the ruins of San Sebastián, were not disposed to make excuses for their inadequate commander. They watched him fumble, their eyes hard with judgment; it was whispered from man to man that the alcalde mayor was plotting to escape with a few favorites in one or both of the bergantines, and some said that it would be better to forestall him and get away themselves, leaving him in the suffering he had refused to credit.

A few weeks of this was enough to take a good deal of the starch out of the bachiller—so much that he was willing to listen to advice. What is more, he listened to it from the man he disliked most, the exasperatingly successful stowaway Vasco Núñez de Balboa. Balboa did not know very much about the Gulf region, but he evidently knew more than anyone else in San Sebastián, and his counsel was simple and convincing.

"I remember," said Balboa, "that years ago, when I came along this coast exploring with Rodrigo de Bastidas, we entered this Gulf; and on the western side, on the right [i.e., northerly] hand as it seems to me, we went ashore; and we saw a village on the far side of a large river, and a land very cool and abundant for food. And," he added with emphasis, "the people there did not put poison on their arrows."

This was enough for the expeditionaries, to whom the other shore

sounded like Paradise after the one they knew. They would cross the Gulf and start afresh. In two sentences, in less than a minute, the destiny of Darién had been decided.

The western side of the Gulf was, by virtue of the pact between the Governors of Tierra Firme, Nicuesa territory. But it was Hojeda territory according to the contract with the Crown, against which no private agreement would be valid, and thus open to occupation by the Urabá colonists. Some seventy-five men were left to hold San Sebastián; the rest—all that could be carried in the bergantines and the lifeboat—sailed over to take possession of the promised land. Balboa must have supplemented his first advice with more detailed information; at any rate, the Spaniards seem to have made directly for the small Río Darién, where the principal village was some way inland.

Some chroniclers say that Chief Cemaco of Darién mustered five hundred bowmen, sent his noncombatant subjects to a safe retreat, and gave battle at once. Casas presents a somewhat different version, based on "my old notes made on hearing the accounts of people who were there." According to these, Cemaco was at first extremely conciliatory, so much so that with more grace than foresight he presented the Spaniards with eight or ten thousand pesos of gold. This immediately provoked insistent questions as to the source of the metal, and after a feeble attempt at convincing his interrogators that it came from heaven, the chief told them that the large pieces were from a place twenty-five leagues distant, and the small ones from near-by rivers. Pressed, he at first consented to serve as guide to the gold fields, but his subjects objected so strenuously (on the grounds that once the invaders found the mines it would be impossible to get rid of them) that, caught between two fires, he took flight. Cemaco tried to hide with a vassal headman, was discovered and captured, kept his secret under torture, and at length escaped to gather his warriors and give battle.

Grouped on a low hill, Cemaco's five hundred fighters were not a reassuring sight, and Enciso was not the man to overlook its gloomier implications. He ordered his men to their knees, and with them implored God to give them victory, swearing to send a pilgrimage and rich votive offerings to the Virgin revered in Seville, Nuestra Señora

del Antigua, in whose honor they would name the settlement and to whom they would dedicate its church. Enciso also required his soldiers to take oath that they would fight to the death, "neither fleeing nor turning their backs."

The action which followed was hardly worth all this preparation. The Darienes cannot have been ignorant of the poison which made the neighboring Urabae's arrows such deadly weapons, but they had not imitated the alien invention—an odd lack of precaution which would be much odder were it not so persistently illustrated through military history. Moreover, they were not inherently a warlike people; until the Christians came they did not need to be, for, in contrast to many tribes of Tierra Firme, they lived at peace with their neighbors. The Spaniards inflicted heavy casualties, and before long Cemaco and his remaining troops were in headlong retreat. The invaders occupied the deserted village near by, and found it gloriously stocked with food. Next day, scouting about the adjacent country, they came on more houses, standing singly or in small groups, and collected a quantity of cotton cloth, woven garments trimmed with fur, hammocks and other effects, and more worked gold. They must also have rounded up a good many prisoners, for Enciso later congratulated himself on his treatment of some homosexuals among them: "When I took Darién, we seized them and burned them; and when the women saw that we burned them they were happy about it." His distribution of pronouns is revealing.

(Sodomy was not considered particularly vicious by the Indians, whether or not Enciso was right in believing that the feminine contingent considered it unfair competition. It was probably practiced less than their conquerors believed. In Spanish eyes it was the most heinous of crimes. The penalty, established by a law of 1254 which began with an embarrassed apology for mentioning so "unsavory" a matter at all, was death of a peculiarly dreadful and protracted sort for both parties.)

Joined by the men who had been left in San Sebastián, the colonists elected to stay in Cemaco's village, which offered ready-made shelter and fields for crops. No document or chronicle gives the date of its taking, but it was evidently some time in November of 1510. Apparently there was some idea at first that the actual settlement might be

built elsewhere: Oviedo says that it was not until some months later that Balboa—to the fore as always in any decisive development in Darién—dedicated it to the Sevillian Madonna and changed its name from La Guardia (the Garrison), Enciso's original choice, to Santa María del Antigua del Darién. With this ceremony the site which had seemed good to an Indian clan—decently retired, good water, enough land for their simple needs—was fixed as that of the first colonial capital of mainland America.

The location is still marked on modern maps, but unfortunately in the wrong place: usually on the sea at the edge of the Atrato Delta, occasionally down in the delta marshes, or where remains of early missions have been found. When labeled: "Ruins of . . ." the error is doubled; built of wood, cane, and thatch, Santa María left no conveniently indicative ruins, and its durable equipment such as forges, church bells, smelter, and the like were taken to Panamá when the seat of government was moved. However, despite the absence of these aids and of such local maps as were made (two of them by Balboa), the clues provided by the settlers themselves and by the mariners who visited it can be pieced together to establish very nearly the real site.

According to the people who were there, Santa María was: 1) twenty-five miles from the bay at the head of the Gulf, and about fourteen from its western entrance, then considered to be at Punta Goleta; 2) on an exact parallel with the three Farallones, which can only have been the present Islas de Titumate; 3) at a distance from the coast variously stated at from under four miles to over eight, probably in reference to two different routes; 4) connected with the coast by two separate trails, one to the small estuary at the river mouth and the "Big Beach" (the Playón), and the other to "the port"; 5) shut in by hills in such fashion that the sun shone on it directly only in the middle hours of the day; 6) on a fork of the Río Darién, small and usually limpid, about a league from its confluence with the main stream. It was also said that the Río Darién had no connection with the Atrato and that it was barely large enough at its best for a native canoe. There are plenty of other confirmatory indications, but since the key ones are in happy agreement it is superfluous to go into them here. They all point to a location on the fork of the Tanela River sometimes called Lajas, a narrow valley walled east and west by hills.

"The port" must have been either La Gloria or Triganá, also called Puerto Escondido.³

The restorative effects of comparative security and regular meals were almost immediate, and organization of the colony proceeded in an atmosphere of brisk initiative. However, the initiatives of Enciso (now once more his usual arbitrary self) were at odds with those of the recruits. When he issued an edict forbidding individual trading for gold on pain of death, and capped this by taking possession of all the accumulated treasure, the colonists' resentment boiled over. The ban on private barter conformed to the royal instructions, but the penalty did not, and in any case Enciso's right to formulate edicts was questionable. Moreover, every *compañero* knew the laws on warfare, which, on the premise that "gain is a thing which all men covet, and much more those who wage war," decreed that the spoils should be divided among the soldiers within nine days of completing the action. Enciso may have argued that the pay-off could not be made in Hojeda's absence, but the men thought they knew what his real motive was. The *bachiller*, they believed, was planning a quiet getaway in the *bergantines* with the gold and a few friends, and they proposed to make sure that he did not succeed.

Thus it was that when the settlers met, as was customary, to elect municipal officers, Enciso was not invited; in fact, lest he dispense with formalities and come anyway, he was not even informed. To his lasting outrage the leaders of the opposition walked off with the elections. The results were: joint *alcaldes*, Vasco Núñez de Balboa and Benito Palazuelos; treasurer, Hojeda's physician, Doctor Alberto; *alguacil*, Bartolomé Hurtado; *regidores*, Diego Albítez, Martín de Zamudio, Esteban Barrantes, and Juan de Valdivia. Zamudio was subsequently promoted to be co-*alcalde* in place of Palazuelos. The *alcaldes* were combination mayors and city magistrates, the *alguacil* was a kind of sheriff, and the *regidores* were aldermen—although anything further from the conventional aldermanic type than these battered, hot-tempered, iron-boweled men would be hard to imagine.

The newly installed officials took over with a firm hand and that devotion to conventional forms so notable in the conquistadores when engaged in unconventional activities. They also took over the *bergantines*, just to be on the safe side. Enciso protested every step of the

way. He accused the council of rebellion; the council replied that, since he had no true authority, there could be no rebellion against it. The recruits had promised obedience to Hojeda, who had disappeared, and eventually to his lieutenant governor, Cosa, who had died. Enciso insisted that he was now Hojeda's substitute, with full power in the Governor's absence; the colonists laughed and asked to see his brevet. That was impossible, said the bachiller stiffly, it had been lost when the nao was wrecked. (He later claimed that Hojeda had sent him a power of attorney by Pizarro, but at the time no one seems to have taken the assertion seriously.) In after years Enciso declared that he arrested some of those responsible for seizing the boats, and that they had submitted lest they be hanged. The bachiller was very free with his threats of capital punishment—which, incidentally, he was not empowered to apply—but if he did manage this countermeasure, its effect was brief.

Matters might have come to a quick climax had not conclusions been postponed by a happy diversion. In the latter part of November, Nicuesa's adjutant Rodrigo de Colmenares arrived, en route to Veragua with long-overdue supplies and reinforcements.

To do Colmenares justice—always a slight effort in view of his double-dealing record—the eleven-month delay in leaving to join his chief was not his fault. Like Enciso, he had been tied down by Diego Colón's obstructive tactics. The Young Admiral had not relinquished his claim to Tierra Firme; on the contrary, he had renewed his demand that the contract with Hojeda and Nicuesa be canceled and the territories assigned to him in their stead. Meanwhile he had continued to do what he could to further the failure of the concessions, encouraged by a total lack of news from either gobernación. In the summer of 1510, however, dispatches had come from the King which were enough to give pause to even Colón.⁴

Fernando was willing to concede something in the clause regarding propertyed recruits from Hispaniola, reducing the number to two hundred; at the same time he confirmed the Governors' right to enlist as many other residents of Hispaniola as they liked. Nicuesa's slaves from Santa Cruz should be repatriated, but they were to be "replaced from other regions." As for Jamaica, it had been assigned to Hojeda and Nicuesa for the good reason that it would be useful to them: neverthe-

less, Colón could send a veedor there to see that no "scandals" developed. His Highness' further remarks were straight to the chin: Colón, whatever his personal opinion might be, had no excuse for failing to carry out his instructions to assist the Governors of Urabá and Veragua, "because it is my will now as always that what I order be agreed with any person whatsoever should be fulfilled," regardless of hypothetical drawbacks. "I command and charge you," His Highness continued, "that without waiting for further letters or orders from me, you fulfill with the said Hojeda and Nicuesa everything contained in the said pact and contract, without fail in any particular, and that you give them all favor and help that may be required to expedite their business, in such fashion that they have no cause to say that because of impediments placed for them there, they give up the performance of their obligations."

This plain speaking was backed up by a letter to Miguel de Pasamonte, Treasurer of the Indies and powerful confidant of the King, enclosing letters patent for the use of Hojeda and Nicuesa in case they had difficulty in getting clearance for their recruits, together with a memorandum of confidential instructions for them. For all that events had overrun these provisions, they were indicative of the King's state of mind, and Colón (who undoubtedly knew about them) was jarred into compliance. Enciso was able to get away in the second week of September, and Colmenares sailed a month later.

Colmenares had a vessel "bought with his own money," and was accompanied by another ship which was either chartered or licensed by the officials of Hispaniola. Years afterwards he claimed that he lost 2000 castellanos in the expedition: five hundred for purchase of the ship, fifty a month for the time of waiting, and a thousand in food-stuffs which spoiled. (The castellano was at this time a money of account peculiar to the Indies, equal to a peso of gold.) This estimate is not to be taken literally, if only because Colmenares made no formal claim on the loss when he was in Spain in 1513. It is true that the second ship vanished from the record after leaving Darién, so that one may fancy her a kind of Flying Spanishman forever sailing her phantom courses. But Colmenares' caravel returned safe to Hispaniola, making money on the voyage. Moreover, staple provisions were not perishable, and Colmenares certainly reached Darién with a full cargo

which he sold at scarcity prices. What he did lose, but failed to mention in his memorials, was a considerable portion of his men at Gaira: forty-one by the lowest count, eleven of them because Colmenares, having seen the others of the landing party killed by the Indians, made sail and ran, leaving them to their fate.

After a stormy voyage the armada made Urabá about the middle of November. Reconnaissance ashore revealed the charred ruins of San Sebastián, and near them the evidences of a lately abandoned camp. This had all the earmarks of recent tragedy; ordering signal fires to be set on the beach, Colmenares hurried to the safety of the ships and had the cannon fired in unison so that any chance survivors might know that there was a Spanish armada at hand. Across the Gulf the men of Darién lit answering beacons, and a mutually satisfying reunion followed. "One side was hungry for gold and the other for food"—in the circumstances a situation which guaranteed an instant entente.

The men from Hispaniola now learned for the first time that Hojeda had left his concession, while the colonists discovered that their chief was still missing. It looked very much as if the Governor of Urabá had vanished for good, in which case his gobernación had no technical title to exist. For that matter, even its material survival was problematic without an officially recognized leader capable of insuring its support. Yet now, when the worst seemed over, the settlers hated to give up what they had won. Enciso they did not want, and in any case his standing and resources fell short of the requirements for captain general of a colony exposed to sabotage from Santo Domingo. What to do?

The dilemma revived a project which had received some consideration in the days preceding Colmenares' arrival. Why should not the Darién settlement throw in its lot with the Veragua gobernación under Diego de Nicuesa? Weighing the alternatives, the *vecinos* of Santa María found this idea more attractive than any other which had occurred to them. Nicuesa's concession was richer, his expedition larger and better outfitted than Hojeda's had been at their best; Nicuesa himself was as powerful and influential as Hojeda, and much more wealthy. (Colmenares had probably told the colonists that royal cédulas had been received in Santo Domingo which confirmed

Hojeda's jurisdiction over the entire Gulf; they seem to have been sure that Darién was a thing to be offered, not yielded.) Enciso and Balboa, for once agreed, were against the plan, but they did not press their opposition. It was finally voted that when Colmenares went on to join his chief, one or two representatives of Santa María del Antigua should go with him, bearing an invitation to the Governor of Veragua to annex Darién.

The official delegation consisted of Colmenares, the bachiller Diego del Corral, Francisco de Agüeros, and Diego Albítez. Each of the ambassadors was privately determined to turn the mission to the best possible account for himself, and none of them had any conception that their ambitions, like the colonists' reasonings, were erected on an imaginary base.

The vecinos of Santa María, under the misapprehension common to the unfortunate that their case was unique, pictured Veragua as a flourishing enterprise. In point of fact it had folded quite as disastrously as San Sebastián, with greater loss and less present hope. Far from being able to foster another settlement, Nicuesa was in urgent need of help if there were to be anything left of his venture save bones in the Isthmian beaches and rusty souvenirs to decorate native bohíos.

VI

THE misadventures of Nicuesa and his men are told at considerable length by three chroniclers who knew the Governor and talked with survivors of the expedition. Their narratives are in frequent disagreement with each other, with such scanty documentary evidence as we possess, and sometimes with the author's statements on another page, but they are as one in depicting the catastrophic quality of a story somber even among the dark tales of the conquest.

Hardship and hazard were normal concomitants of every pioneering venture in the Indies, where no one could expect colonization without casualties. Nevertheless the impression is inescapable that a large part

of the disaster in Veragua was attributable to the Governor himself. Diego de Nicuesa was not only inexperienced; he had neither the emotional nor, it would seem, the mental stability for the task in hand. Amateur psychiatry is an indiscreet game, but one cannot help being struck by the increasingly abnormal behavior of the Governor of Veragua in the thirteen months of his command. The armada was barely away before the expeditionaries were aware that he had suffered a sea-change: the witty courtier, the shrewd man of affairs disappeared, to be succeeded by a hectoring autocrat who insulted his officers, contradicted his pilots, made his own (erroneous) marks on the charts, and treated his men with rasping severity. He was to display this humor throughout, briefly punctuated in moments of exaltation or despair by attitudes equally distressing. It is not surprising that when the time of his last need came, there was no one to lift a hand to save him.

The Veragua fleet may have touched at Urabá, but its first stopover was just above the Gulf, in the Bay of Anachucuna. The anchorage was christened Puerto de Misas, in memory of the first mass to be said in the concession. Here it was decided to divide the armada: Nicuesa and his lieutenant governor, Lope de Olano, would go on with the smaller vessels to explore the coast, while the naos would follow at leisure. The plan was basically sound but badly elaborated, for it included no system for maintaining contact between the advance party and the main fleet—an error which King Fernando remarked when he read Nicuesa's report.

The scout detachment consisted of a caravel (temporarily promoted to flagship) and two bergantines. Several veterans of Columbus' fourth voyage, including one, and possibly two, pilots, went with it, and when in due course the flotilla came abreast of the Río Belén, they advised the Governor that he had reached his destination: this harborless coast was Veragua proper, and the lofty sierra to the southwest was that which the Old Admiral had described as heavy with gold for as far as a man could march in twenty suns. Nicuesa denied the identification, and the more the old Fourth Voyage hands insisted, the more obstinate he became. The pilots "did not know what they were talking about"; he, Nicuesa, had a chart and a description of the coast

from the hand of Columbus' brother Bartolomé: Veragua was farther on. The ships were ordered to hold to their course, while the outraged pilot of Olano's bergantín remarked bitterly that if this were not Veragua they could chop off his head.¹

That night there was a storm, and the ships were separated. Olano rode out the blow in the shelter of an island, and next day fell in with the second bergantín, piloted by Pedro de Umbria. The flag caravel had vanished, and after a fruitless search—the extent and sincerity of which is a matter of controversy—Olano and Umbria turned back to locate the rest of the armada. They found the naos at the Chagres, lying up for overhaul after the passage from Puerto de Misas. The Lieutenant Governor's efforts to rejoin his chief may have lacked conviction, but at all events they satisfied the members of the expedition, including the Crown officials and a relative of Nicuesa named Cueto, who had been left in temporary charge of the naos. After talking the situation over it was decided to stick to the original plan, and with Olano in command the ships proceeded to Veragua. Nicuesa, if he had survived the storm, would realize in time that he had overshot the mark, and return to the appointed rendezvous.

The Río Belén was a few miles short of the true gold river, but Columbus, the ghostly guide of the expedition, had declared that it offered the only harbor in Veragua. He had also said that it was a very good harbor, a statement on a par with his assertion that the local Indians, who had driven him away by force, were the meekest of people. The river basin was shut in by a pounding bar too shallow to admit more than a small caravel, and that only when weather and tide were favorable; outside, the open shore was beaten by surf. The landing had to be made in the ships' boats, and one (Olano's) capsized with the loss of fourteen men. The naos, already damaged by shipworm, were soon beached and broken up.

Without ships the five-hundred-odd expeditionaries had little choice as to where they would settle. Martyr says that Pedro de Umbria, "being of irritable disposition," set out in a boat with twelve companions to establish an independent colony somewhere else, only to be drowned with all but one of his men in crossing the bar. Elsewhere, however, Martyr states that Umbria had been authorized to scout on behalf of the colonists. This is a more credible version; surely no one,

however irritable, could think to conquer a wild and hostile country with a dozen friends in a rowboat.

For some reason food was scarce, although the armada should have been provisioned for a full year. The first huts, erected on a beachy point, were swept away in a storm. It rained almost incessantly, insects were a torment, and before long, fevers and jungle sores were rife. "In tribulation many died," and it was noted, disquietingly, that they all died at low tide. This led to another disturbing discovery: the bodies buried in the sand "were eaten in eight days as if they had been interred for fifty years." "They took it for an evil sign"—no doubt remembering the ominous portents and prophecies made in Hispaniola before the armada sailed, when a sword-shaped comet flamed in the sky, and astrologers and savants declared that Nicuesa went under a baleful star.

Olano did as well as could be expected in these trying circumstances. He had stronger houses built on higher ground, started work on a tower atop a hillock, saw that land was tilled and sown to corn, and, using lumber hewn from local timber and salvaged material from the naos, set about making a new caravel. (The comparative ease with which Spanish carpenters could put together a seaworthy craft on any tropic beach is a continual marvel.) He also took an expedition to investigate the Veragua River, where the paramount chief of the region, El Quibián, had his capital village some miles from the sea. The Spaniards were not looking for trouble; their target was the place, six leagues beyond the village, where Bartolomé Colón's sailors had quarried nuggets with pocket knives, and they earnestly hoped that the Quibián would be in a tolerant mood. In this they were disappointed, for the chief came out to meet them with a body of warriors that compelled respect; he was not particularly eager to fight, but seemed determined to do so if required. Fortunately the river lay between the two forces, a barrier which permitted both sides to renounce battle with dignity and relief. Olano contented himself with taking one of the Quibián's outlying strongholds, where he installed a reluctant garrison under a certain Alonso Runyelo. This outpost, a huge circular bohío over a hundred feet in diameter, was surrounded by a hundred and twenty spaced posts, each tastefully garnished with a human head. Oviedo remarks that it made "a very nice fort," adding

that the Old Admiral had given it the gentle name of Santa María de Redonda.

Meanwhile Nicuesa and his crew were enduring worse hardships than any in Veragua. The caravel had evidently passed Chiriquí Lagoon and Almirante Bay without sighting them, since even Nicuesa would have had to recognize those keys to the geography of the coast. As it was, the Governor sailed close-hauled for two days to see if the bergantines would catch up with him, and then continued his stubborn course away from his goal. How far he went cannot be said with certainty—perhaps the better part of the way to Cape Gracias á Dios. One of his mariners, Cristóbal Gómez, testified that they got 120 leagues (440 miles) beyond Veragua, and from the earliest days of Spanish conquest in Honduras the name of Nicuesa was given to a bay not far south of the cape. If Gómez' estimate was exactly right, the farthest point was the Río Grande, which Columbus had called the River of Disasters after losing there a boat and two sailors; on the old maps, however, it was marked as a "gulf," and considerably farther north.

At all events, after some time Nicuesa put into harbor inside a river mouth. The river had been high, but it went down abruptly and left the caravel resting on the bottom; her seams opened, and the next freshet finished her off in a sudden roll of water and debris. As her cables snapped, a sailor jumped overboard with a line, only to be swept away by the current; another took his place and succeeded in fastening a hawser to a tree, thus saving all the others. The Spaniards faced the situation with the practiced valiance of their kind. Someone swam out and salvaged the sails to make haversacks and clumsy shirts (the castaways were, as usual, naked); the current brought them the ship's boat, bottom up, and a cask of flour and one of oil.

Thus outfitted, Nicuesa, pigheaded in the grand manner, gave the order to go not back but forward—or so it would appear from the accounts of his adventures. But in view of the evidence as to how far he sailed, it is probable that he really turned south. By this time the mariners who had been with Columbus must have enlightened him on his position beyond possibility of contradiction.

Looking remarkably unlike conquerors, the company followed

along the shore, plodding endlessly through dark sand, stumbling over drift and rocky headlands. Diego Ribero, one of Columbus' veterans, went with three other sailors in the dinghy, and ferried the others at streams too deep for fording—a difficult task on that coast and, if it is true that the boat would hold only five people, a prolonged one. After Ribero, the most useful member of the party was a dog, "who was good company in their extreme necessity," and procured the last square meal they were to have for a long time. He flushed a deer, and when it took to the water "he did not fail in his duty, though he could barely stand for weakness"; he swam after it and towed it back by one ear. Luckily the Indians were not in evidence; their only recorded victim was Nicuesa's page, killed by an arrow from ambush, perhaps because he wore a white head covering and seemed important.

The deer was secured just at the entrance to the bay now called Bluefields, which the Admiral had christened San Mateo because he was there on September twenty-first, St. Matthew's day.² Either his Fourth Voyagers failed to realize that the point opposite was not a continuation of the mainland (things look different from the land) or more likely, it merely seemed wiser to stick to the seacoast rather than detour around the bay. The company crossed to the opposite point, and found themselves on Isla del Ciervo (Deer Island). And here the Governor called a halt. It is about three hundred and fifty miles from Deer Island to Veragua.

The island was pleasant-seeming at first, but it was not an ideal camping spot for men without provisions, without gear for fishing or hunting, without clothes or shelter, and, after a time, without a boat. They ate shellfish, lizards, insects, and finally roots, grass and leaves; their only water was from a brackish swamp. There, but for an act of well-considered insubordination, the history of Diego de Nicuesa might have ended—which might, on the whole, have been the lesser evil. The Fates, with the malice of mousing cats, chose to let him go, taking as their instruments Ribero and the other mariners who had managed the dinghy. These stout fellows had become increasingly disgusted with the fatalistic inertia which had taken possession of the Governor, by which the whole company appeared destined to passive suicide. One night they took matters, and the boat, into their own hands and made off to try to reach the armada. Incredibly, they succeeded.

Nicuesa damned them for deserters, but he owed them his life and those of many of his companions.

Ribero and his mates cannot have had an easy voyage in their cockleshell, but they were better off than the desolate band left behind. Prisoned on their island, that emaciated, ulcer-blotched, naked crew could not have been recognized as part of the "*muy lúcida compañía*" that had started from Hispaniola. Some died of fevers; some lay in the final apathy of starvation; some had moments of aimless violence and ran pointlessly from side to side of the island shouting prayers like curses. The more reasoning of them discussed, weakly, the building of a raft, got together a bundle of poles, and then were too feeble to save it when it drifted out of their hands.

One phenomenon, named Gonzalo de Badajoz, still had some strength left. Aided by two other supermen, he managed to fell a tree and burn out a crude canoe, in which the three tried to reach the mainland with the project—this time duly authorized—of backtracking to Veragua in search of help. Their clumsy tub turned over, but they all got to the coast and started walking south. A native chief who had been paddled down-river to inspect his fisheries saw them and sent them food, and thus fortified, they survived to be picked up by the bergantín which came from Veragua to rescue Nicuesa.

Lope de Olano, informed by Ribero of the Governor's plight, may have felt only a tempered joy at his chief's survival, but he lost no time in saving him. A ship, or ships, dispatched under the guidance of Ribero, reached the island—strange to say, without untoward incident—and not long afterwards Nicuesa disembarked in Veragua.

The uses of adversity were ever bitter to Nicuesa, and rescue did nothing to improve his disposition. It was immediately apparent that the colonists were not to be commended for having saved him; they were to be punished for not having done it sooner. Olano was sentenced to hang as a traitor; his failure to find the flag caravel after the storm had been deliberate, the Governor declared; moreover, he was responsible for all the suffering and loss of life in Veragua as on the island, since if he, Nicuesa, had been in charge all would have gone well. The more prominent expeditionaries were accessories in crime; they too should pay with their lives for not having forced the Lieutenant Governor to search for his chief. (No mention was made of

a commander's duty to his subordinates, or of the fact that Nicuesa had, in effect, abandoned his.) The appalled colonists, finding their appeals for mercy without effect, finally hit on an argument more persuasive: "If famine and constant calamities cut down our number on the one hand, and cruel sentences kill us on the other, who, señor, do you expect to serve you and companion you? There is no doubt whatever but that your lot would not be happy, nor would you be spared still greater hardships."

Nicuesa retreated, but no farther than he had to. Olano, reprieved but not forgiven, was kept in irons; some of his supporters were condemned to unspecified penalties; and Nicuesa, if he refrained from the gallows, "became from then on most intolerant, ill-tempered and intractable, and treated the few men who were left to him very badly and with harshness, not considering the starvation and affliction which they had endured, or that to see one another die every day was torment enough and to spare." And die they did, for the Governor drove the sick as hard as the well. "They believed that he used them badly of set purpose, to revenge himself on them because they had not gone to look for him."

Nicuesa now announced that the colony would be moved immediately to a new location. There were good reasons for a change, but the colonists suspected that the decision was only another form of punishment. Belén was indisputably bad, but who could say that another place might not be worse? And how could they give up their maize, now almost ripe for harvest? That corn was more than food: it was a symbol, the proof of something accomplished despite enemy nature and enemy Indians and even enemy stars. Besides, for all its cruelty, this was the land of riches. "Men will gather gold there . . ." Columbus had promised, "a packload of gold in one day . . . gold with which a man does all he desires in this world and can even lift souls to Heaven."

Arguments and pleas had not the slightest effect on Nicuesa, although he did consent to allow some of his people to remain in Belén until they had gathered the crops and finished building a second caravel. He intended to establish himself at, or near, Portobelo (just east of the Panama Canal), and on the basis of what was known of that bit of coast the plan was much sounder than most of his ideas.

Portobelo harbor was safe and deep, the inhabitants were numerous and their agriculture extensive, and the islands which lay just around the headland were so well tilled and productive that Columbus had named them and the anchorage in their shelter the Islands and Port of Provisions (*de Bastimentos*).

What spoiled Portobelo for Nicuesa was that the inhabitants were not only numerous but belligerent, and unlike the river tribes, they lived directly on the sea, where they could repel invasion before it began. When the Governor, who had already sent a detachment ahead from Veragua, got there with sixty men on the second trip of the bergantines, he was driven off with the loss of twenty *compañeros*. Wearily continuing his course, he came to another, less attractive harbor and—so Casas says—exclaimed: “In the Name of God, let us stop here!” And God’s Name, *Nombre de Dios*, it has been called ever since.³ Either the advance party had already gone there, or it had been picked up in Portobelo, for, except for those who were to follow only after gathering the harvest, all the surviving expeditionaries were now in the new location.

Nombre de Dios was no improvement on Belén. Foraging raids, mostly conducted by Badajoz, gave slight results beyond the obvious one of antagonizing the Indians, and once more the settlers were without food or native laborers. A little palmito meal was coveted “like manna from heaven”; a skeletal dog for the pot brought 20 *castellanos* (about \$93) in gold, and the water in which his mangy skin was boiled was worth a *castellano* a bowl. A pair of toads sold for 6 ducats, as a special favor to a sick man because he begged so hard for them, and it was said that a group of thirty Spaniards “rabid with hunger” came upon the decomposing corpse of an Indian, ate it, and died of the moral and physical effects. In these conditions the work of building a fort atop the hillock chosen by Nicuesa for the purpose was unbearable, but the Governor allowed his tottering men no respite; when they pleaded that they were at death’s door, his answer was: “Get out! Get along to the dying ground!” “They cursed and abhorred him, holding him to be their bitter enemy, nor did they find in word or deed of his a crumb of comfort.” So scourged, they finished the timber fort before the end of December.

It is in *Nombre de Dios* that we first hear of a lady among the

colonists: Doña Inés de Escobar, wife of the elderly veedor, Juan de Quicedo. Doña Inés was no weakling, and was, indeed, to prove very nearly indestructible; nevertheless, it is hard to visualize this mature gentlewoman crawling unnoted and unsung about Deer Island as, clad in a scrap of dirty sailcloth, she grubbed with other castaways for worms and roots. It is possible, of course, that she was in Belén, but there is no mention of her there, or of the veedor, who should have been to the fore in moments of decision. The explanation would seem to be that the Quicedos left Hispaniola some time after the rest of the armada, in the little caravel owned jointly with Cosa and Martínez, and that they joined Nicuesa after the colony was in Nombre de Dios.

Before starting from Belén, Nicuesa had written letters asking for aid from Hispaniola, and a long and querulous report for King Fernando. These he seems to have entrusted to Cueto, who was to go to Hispaniola with Ledesma in the Veragua-built caravel. Reports, though often compiled gradually, were usually dated only at the last moment before dispatch; Nicuesa's bore the date of November 9, 1510, and he appears to have left Belén almost immediately after.⁴ Ledesma and Cueto carried out their assignment successfully, but either they delayed departure or their voyage was slow, for they did not reach Santo Domingo until sometime after February 19, 1511. The report for the King, forwarded from Hispaniola in May, was delivered in Spain in July.

Fernando replied promptly in his best vein, a compound of comfort, criticism, and advice. Nicuesa was commended for all he said he had achieved and commiserated for what he said he had suffered; it was well to have punished those who deserved such measures, but on the other hand "you should endeavor not to give occasion for indiscipline"; after all, had he remained with his fleet he would have been spared both personal hardship and the necessity of punishing anyone, not to mention the apparently imminent risk of total failure. It was also essential that he treat the Indians with the utmost consideration, respecting scrupulously their liberty and property, so as to win their friendly co-operation. The King promised to issue fresh orders for assistance to the concessions and to instruct Esquivel to step up production in Jamaica and shipment of foodstuffs to Tierra Firme. Thus

aided and advised, Nicuesa might by God's grace save his gobernación and receive from it such recompense as would make all the hardships seem worth while. As for the expeditionaries, Fernando (who had learned a great deal more about the colony and its governor than was set forth in Nicuesa's report) was addressing a letter to them, expressing his appreciation of all they had done in his service.

Fernando sent off the promised instructions at once, couched in terms calculated to compel respect. But before the cédulas were penned, before even the reports which prompted them had started on their way from Santo Domingo, there was no longer a functioning gobernación in Veragua. There was no longer even a governor.

VII

SOMETIME in January of 1511 a bergantín from Nombre de Dios, out on a foraging trip to the islands near by, sighted and signaled two Spanish ships that were passing some distance offshore. The vessels were those from Darién with Colmenares and the nominating committee, bound for Veragua and still happily unaware of the irony of their quest for support and protection from Diego de Nicuesa. Putting about, they entered the harbor to receive a delirious welcome from the few score wretched survivors who now comprised all the colony.

How many of Nicuesa's men were left is uncertain. According to the most conservative estimate, three hundred and eighty had died in the twelve preceding months, and other calculations set the toll much higher. However, some of the presumably softer members of the company had come through the ordeal fairly well: the elderly veedor and Doña Inés; an unspectacular but resistant priest named Sánchez, who was just beginning a career of wild and unwilling adventure; and a friar, Gerónimo de Aguilar, whose subsequent life was to be pure melodrama. Olano, too, had survived. The emissaries from Santa María del Antigua found him in the plaza, where he was kept shackled like a delinquent slave and forced to grind palm meal all day for a public spectacle. (Oviedo cites this as an example of mercy,

Nicuesa "being compassionate by nature," but considers the kindness excessive.)

The Governor's reaction to salvation could hardly have been more unfortunate. That laconic poise which distinguishes heroes of fancy in similar circumstances would have seemed silly to any conquistador, but Nicuesa did not get over his emotion in the usual flood of tears and then relax. In Martyr's words, "after having wept and sighed and poured out complaints, after having overwhelmed his rescuer Colmenares with thanks and having almost rolled at his feet, Nicuesa, when the fear of starvation was removed, before he even laid eyes on the colonists of Urabá, began to talk freely of his projects of reform and of his intention to take possession of all the gold." Absorbed in the delightful prospect of recouping his fortunes in Darién, he failed to note a growing chilliness in his audience; the impression given by the chroniclers is that he was garrulous to the point of babbling, and that everything he said was wrong.

The men from Santa María listened and exchanged shocked comments, their enthusiasm effectively quenched. Quicedo, who had conceived a violent dislike of the Governor "for reasons of honor" (Doña Inés was perhaps younger than appears?), listened and took mental notes for future use. Lope de Olano heard, and contrived to have an illuminating chat with the emissaries, and to entrust them with letters for his fellow Biscayans in Darién—communications bound to have considerable effect in view of Biscayan clannishness and the fact that one of the addressees, the alcalde Zamudio, was a kinsman. All this spelled trouble, but it might not have been past remedying had not Nicuesa been inspired to a culminating piece of ineptitude. He disposed that the arrival in Darién should be made in installments, and that he himself would arrive last, "to be received with arches of triumph."

The arrangement was impeccable from the point of view of protocol: first a bergantín with Albítez and Corral, then another with the chief veedor, and finally the Great Man himself. It was also guaranteed to insure an inimical atmosphere in Santa María before the Governor could set foot there. This latter aspect of the matter did not occur to Nicuesa, from whose triple-plated complacency Olano's parting shot, "Does he fancy that Hojeda's men will receive him as

we received him when he came, broken, to Veragua?" glanced off unnoticed. He meant to give the Darienites time to prepare for his advent in suitable fashion—and this, as it turned out, was precisely what he did. Preparations started as soon as the vanguard arrived to enlighten the colonists as to the reforms they might expect under the new regime, and as to the character of the prospective regent.

Vasco Núñez de Balboa, like many another officeholder when warned of an approaching ax, is said to have done a good deal to crystallize anti-Nicuesa feeling by confidential, man-to-man conversations with the vecinos. Whatever his activities, he worked with the current. Nicuesa was damned out of his own mouth. His intention to confiscate the gold touched every settler in his most sensitive spot; his vague talk of disciplinary measures was a menace; his plan to dislodge the strongest men from the settlement and send them to replace the garrison in Nombre de Dios made every able-bodied *compañero* his enemy. The Biscayans, led by Zamudio, formed an irreconcilable block. Enciso, much as he hated the existing order in Santa María, foresaw worse things under Nicuesa and came out strongly against admitting the Governor, thus achieving brief harmony with his rivals. Colmenares may have refrained from campaigning against his chief, but his attitude is sufficiently clear from the unflattering picture of Nicuesa given by Martyr, whose principal informant he was. Even the two nominating delegates who had wangled positions for themselves before quitting Nombre de Dios—Albítez, who had been promised the post of alguacil, and Diego del Corral, slated for *alcalde*—now felt that these honors would be bought too dear. If there were any dissenting voices when the colonists decided to deny entry to Nicuesa, they were not recorded.

It should be noted that the decision was in no sense a revolt. Nicuesa had no vested rights in Darién, and the men who had enlisted under Hojeda owed him no allegiance. To rescind an invitation is not elegant, but neither is it criminal. As Casas remarked, the measure of Nicuesa's stupidity was that, having received a lifesaving offer, he talked before any formal agreement or oaths of fealty had been made: "At least," the chronicler commented, "he might have dissimulated until after he had been accepted."

The colonists knew that their refusal to carry out their proposal

could not be held to be a breach of loyalty. On the other hand, the Governor of Veragua was a personage, and he might insist on standing on the letter of the invitation. In the circumstances they felt that their determination would look better if it were done up in quasi-judicial wrappings and tied with red tape. It was therefore dressed in a ceremony in the settlement church which satisfied the Spanish hankering for legalistic forms, lent a becoming tone of righteousness to the whole affair, and insured that no one could disclaim his personal responsibility should he later think it convenient to do so. The proceedings were very solemn: a cloth was spread before the altar, and on it a cushion holding a crucifix, "as is done on Holy Thursday or Good Friday"; one by one, in order of rank, the vecinos advanced and swore by the Cross not to receive Don Diego de Nicuesa as governor—first the *alcaldes*, then the treasurer, the *alguacil*, the *regidores*, and lastly the *compañeros*. The vow had been put in writing by the notary Hernando de Argüello, and each man after he pronounced it set his signature or his mark to the document.¹

Thus when Nicuesa, bursting with confidence and unpopular projects, dropped anchor in the estuary of the Río Darién a few days later, the colonists met him in very different guise from that he had expected. They were armed and threatening, and when a spokesman stepped forward it was not to deliver a flowery address of welcome, but to shout a harsh injunction against landing. Don Diego was shocked into conciliation.

"Señores," he called back, "you sent to summon me, and I come in answer to your summons. Let me land, and we will talk things over, and you will hear me and I hear you, and we will come to an understanding, and afterwards you can do what you like with me."

The men of Santa María would not listen. That night the bergantín lay hove-to outside the estuary, and next morning Nicuesa edged it inside again, hoping for a change of heart. A group of *compañeros* made beckoning gestures from the beach, and he put off in the dinghy with pathetic eagerness, but their faces must have warned him as he stepped to shore. The Governor of Veragua took to his heels. Either he had built up his strength astonishingly in the previous weeks, or terror lent him speed, for he ran so fast that the men in armor could not catch him.

This was too much for Balboa.

"You go too far," he told the excited *compañeros* distastefully. "Let him alone."

As a matter of fact, Balboa was feeling rather sorry for Nicuesa. The weakest point in his character—one that was to cause him infinite trouble and be his ultimate undoing—was a lovable and unfortunate inability to keep his animosities alive. By nature singularly unvindictive, he seemed to hold the misguided doctrine that an adversary once defeated is thenceforth innocuous, and repeated lessons to the contrary did nothing to alter this habit of mind. Now, having no experience of the Governor's temper when his crest was high, he found it impossible to believe that anyone so beaten could be dangerous, and went so far as to suggest that nothing in the communal oath forbade allowing Nicuesa to remain as a guest.

The colonists were in no mood for kindly concessions, and they did not share Vasco Núñez' benevolent optimism. When Nicuesa abjectly begged to be admitted on any terms, "beseeching them to take him as *compañero* if they did not want him for governor," they refused. Mindful of his lightning recoveries from despair to arrogance in the past, they said that "if he went in by the sleeve he would end by coming out at the neck." Nicuesa groveled; if they would not have him as a *compañero* and free, would they not let him stay as a prisoner, if need be in irons? He would rather die in chains in Santa María than of hunger or an Indian arrow in *Nombre de Dios*. And he had lost so much money! Twelve thousand *castellanos* his expedition had cost—all wasted and without profit.

This sort of thing was little calculated to win either respect or sympathy. The jeering crowd was openly contemptuous and nearly out of hand. Francisco Benítez, a loud and easy-mouthed fellow, shouted something like, "We don't need a dirty dog like you among us!" and Balboa, in a blaze of anger, ordered that he be given a hundred lashes, undeterred by the fact that Benítez was a friend of the co-alcalde Zamudio. (Zamudio did not protest, but Benítez paid back with interest later on.) The lesson checked the drift toward violence, but Balboa knew that he could not control the men indefinitely; his power was too new, and although the colonists had stumbled on practical democracy, its theory was too alien for them to have any

ingrained deference for authority which they themselves had conferred. He therefore advised Nicuesa to return at once to his ship and in no circumstances to leave it unless he, Balboa, were present.

Back in the safety of his bergantín, Don Diego immediately felt the stimulation which possessed him after every relief from peril. The Darienites would weaken, and he would take them unawares and force them to yield. In pursuance of this plan he posted the fifty cross-bowmen he had brought with him in the canebrakes near the landing place, with instructions to attack at his signal, ordered dinner, and with rapidly rising spirits sat down to await developments.

In the course of time, down the trail from Santa María came three regidores: Barrantes, Juan de Vegines, and the ex-ambassador Albítez. If we believe Oviedo's none-too-reliable narrative, proceedings were conducted with oppressive politeness and extreme duplicity on both sides. (Oviedo imputes the duplicity only to the regidores, but remembering the bowmen in the canebrake, one must allow an equal measure to the Governor.) The regidores hailed Nicuesa, apologetic and reassuring: he must forgive the colonists misled by fellows of the baser sort; all the best people were on his side, and really wanted him for governor. Nicuesa fell for this without a struggle. "Señores," he called eagerly, "do you command that I come ashore, or will you do me the favor of coming aboard and we will dine together?" "Señores, as Your Grace commands." "No, señores, as is your pleasure." "Señor, it must be only as you desire." After this Alphonse-and-Gaston exchange, which completely canceled Balboa's warning in Nicuesa's mind, the unfortunate Governor, misjudging to the last, hastened to land and so "to fall into the hands of those who were dying to ruin him."

The arrival of more men, led by Zamudio, marked the end of this drama within a drama. Nicuesa, roughly enjoined to leave at once and forever, rallied in the certainty of disaster to accuse his tormentors wildly of imaginary crimes: of invading his territory, of treason, of rebellion against God Himself. His voice was drowned by the compañeros' clamor, his hidden bowmen made no move to help him, and before an hour had passed he had been hustled aboard the bergantín and escorted to the mouth of the estuary. Unable to face the

tribulations in which he had left his men in Nombre de Dios, he announced that he would go to Hispaniola.²

In the morning—Saturday, March 1, 1511—Don Diego de Nicuesa sailed on his last voyage. Nothing was ever heard of him or his crew again. A legend grew up that the ship had been wrecked in Cuba, and that a tree had been found there with the inscription: "Here perished the unfortunate Nicuesa," but it was proven fake. Oviedo suggests that they may have put in to Cartagena and been killed by the Indians of Caramairi. The truth was never known. Half a century later, when it was only part of an old saga and anyone's guess was good, Benzoni polished off the incident with snappy inaccuracy: they landed for water, were attacked by the Indians, were eaten down to the last man, "and that was the end of Diego de Nicuesa."

The foregoing follows in the main Casas' account of the last act in the tragedy of Nicuesa. Oviedo, that rampant partisan, has a much more succulent tale of infamy and wronged innocence in which Vasco Núñez plays the part of a villain whose villainy is both involved and superfluous. The story, given largely in conversational quotes, apparently originated with Alonso Runyelo. In it Nicuesa was Balboa's guest in Santa María, and after "eating at the same table and sleeping in the same room" for two or three weeks, the two planned a coup. ("What is it worth to you if I make you governor?" "Anything you like, if you do it quickly and obey my orders.") Balboa agreed to find out who was for Nicuesa and who against, and then to see that all the opposers were confined to their quarters under pain of death. The supporters would thus have things their own way; Runyelo, as go-between, would tell the Governor when to act.

This decided, Balboa told Nicuesa to return to his ship "so that they won't see us together and suspect me"—a rather excessive precaution for men who had been sharing the same room for weeks. Whereupon, "with the cunning of a fox," he did exactly the opposite of what he had promised: he shut up the pros and unleashed the *contras*, after which he sat down to a social evening at home and let nature take its course. Runyelo was sent to tell Nicuesa to trust only the *regidores* and the doctor; the *regidores* and the doctor perfidiously

lured the Governor ashore, and it was all over but the shouting. On being told what had happened, Balboa's only comment was: "Alonso Runyelo, this Governor of yours has been exceedingly imprudent"—to which the righteous Runyelo "did not reply a word, because he knew the iniquity and the times."

It is almost a pity to pass up such a good story, but it will not withstand inspection. The ceremony of repudiation was a matter of record, and the judicial investigation of the affair (conducted at a time when Vasco Núñez was fair game for any accusation) found that no one could be singled out as specially culpable in a course of action which was, after all, not without some excuse.

The third contemporary narrative of Nicuesa in Santa María is in Martyr. It is brief, damns both Nicuesa and Balboa (the latter as a bullying jack-in-office who intimidated the respectable colonists), and is more interesting for what it reveals of Martyr's informants than for the record of events. These informants were Enciso and, more especially, Colmenares, who were engaged at the time in trying to ruin Balboa while advancing their own interests. Martyr, writing while the interviews were fresh, mirrors their line of campaign.

Considering that Enciso decorates himself with the white flower of a blameless life, it is reasonable to ask what explanation he offered of his part in Nicuesa's ouster. What did that upright judge say he was doing in those agitated days? So far as any records show, he said nothing at all. Oviedo, his "intimate friend," says that he was marking time throughout in confinement aboard a bergantín which had been calked with a blunt iron so that the seams would not hold, but this handsome alibi is unsupported even by Enciso. Martyr, Casas, and Gómara are as one in stating that he took active part against Nicuesa. Certainly in all the accusations which he later composed against Vasco Núñez and the men of Darién he avoided the whole subject of Nicuesa with care and considerable skill, devoting himself with single-minded persistence to his own affairs.

The bachiller's affairs were matters of money and prestige, but mostly money. His unpopularity in Darién had begun on what might be called general terms; what set the seal on it was his proprietary attitude toward the colony's treasure. Had there been any lingering doubt in the settlers' minds about his intentions, the injunction which

he served on them after they had excluded him from the roster of officials would have instantly dispelled it.

The terms of this demand, according to the bachiller's own statement, were as follows: (a) the elected officials were to refrain from exercising their functions; (b) the two bergantines and the lifeboat were to be given into Enciso's keeping; (c) all gold in the treasury was to be handed over to him at once. Alternatively, as a substitute for items (b) and (c), the bachiller presented another demand: that all the loot, less the King's quinto, be divided into three equal parts, two of which should be given to him outright as compensation for his ships and their equipment; and that, of the remaining third, he be given the captain-general's share, described as "*una joya y cuatro suertes*"—a jewel and four lots. The proposal had a certain grandeur. By Enciso's own calculation it would have given him 5590 pesos—a return of 357⅓ per cent on his declared investment—and left rather less than twenty-four pesos apiece for the other participants in the taking of Darién.

The bachiller cannot have been under the delusion that he would get what he asked for, and if he had been, the colonists would soon have disabused him. When he continued to make a nuisance of himself, they took him into custody and drew up a bill charging him with the very crimes with which he taxed the council: usurpation of authority, violation of contractual rights, and attempted misappropriation.

The investigation ran to a foregone conclusion in an indictment. After a little, however, Enciso was set at liberty on condition that he leave the colony, "which was just what he wanted most." At this point Balboa suffered one of his typical, by-gones-be-by-gones relaxations, and persuaded the vecinos to offer to let the bachiller stay after all, as chief justice or as alguacil mayor.³ Perhaps he was influenced by the thought that a clever and vindictive lawyer could be more harmful outside the colony than in it, but this was an idea that had already occurred to Enciso. The bachiller was not tempted by the chance to live in Santa María as second fiddle to Vasco Núñez, and, declining the invitation, he arranged passage for himself and his two Spanish servants to Hispaniola on Colmenares' caravel. He left just a month after Nicuesa, his ultimate destination Castile.

Two other prominent members of the colony sailed at the same

time: the joint *alcalde*, Martín de Zamudio, and the *regidor*, Juan de Valdivia. Both went as *procuradores* of the settlers, Valdivia to enlist the help of the officials in Santo Domingo and to return as soon as possible with supplies, and Zamudio to present reports, petitions, and an offering of selected *guanines* weighing nearly thirteen pounds to King Fernando in Spain. The reports, which were to be shown also to Diego Colón and the Treasurer Pasamonte in Hispaniola, were apparently composed as from the settlement officials in a body. It would be interesting to know how they were written; they must have included mention of the late unpleasantness with Nicuesa and some explanation of the falling-out with Enciso, and one can imagine the studious collaboration among the more literate *vecinos* as they prepared an account which would produce the desired effect. The petitions were the usual requests for royalty reduction and other helpful concessions, and seem to have been substantially those granted in June of 1513. There was also a long letter directed to the King by the *veedor* Quicedo containing "the relation of all that had happened since he left Hispaniola." Since Quicedo was an experienced and much-respected official of the Crown, his report did much to shape opinion in Castile. The text is not extant, but its tenor is clear, and it was not such as to aid and comfort Nicuesa. Finally, Zamudio carried a special plea from the colonists as a whole: that His Highness name a governor for Darién, preferably in the person of their own choice, Vasco Núñez de Balboa.

No one was elected to take Zamudio's place in Santa María, and Balboa was thus left sole *alcalde* and, in effect, absolute commander of the colony. The change was more apparent than real, for, although the two had been technically equal in office, Balboa, "who was very clever and had more innate ability, was everything." (The ability was indisputable; cleverness, on the other hand, is not the attribute suggested by a study of Vasco Núñez' character. Balboa's outstanding mental quality was common sense. This, however, he possessed to a remarkable degree. In a milieu where it was in notably short supply it made him well-nigh unique.)

Balboa's undivided rule in Darién began on April 4, 1511. He was to be supreme there for just over three years—the years of his true glory.

VIII

THE nao from Darién, luckier or better navigated than so many east-bound from the Isthmus, made Hispaniola without mishap, and also without haste. It was not less than seven weeks before Enciso, Zamudio, and Valdivia reached Santo Domingo.¹ The greater part of the time seems to have been spent in Cuba, some of it in the village of Macaca, just east of Cape Cruz.

The *cacique* of Macaca was a friendly soul, known to the Spaniards as Comendador—a name bestowed on him in recognition of his qualities at the time Comendador Ovando was governor in Hispaniola. For motives connected with a miraculous image of the Virgin which, left to him by a pious castaway, had thereafter confounded his enemies and insured his supremacy in the region, Comendador was a fervent Christian, and for ten years he had looked after such Spaniards as came his way with generous hospitality. His most recent guests, prior to those from Santa María del Antigua, had been in special need of his care. Enciso and his companions, hearing about them, must have identified them as Alonso de Hojeda, Talavera, and their crew.

For the men from Darién the days spent in Macaca were both agreeable and edifying. There were two priests in the party—one of whom, named Juan Pérez de Zalduondo, was to return to Santa María four years later as dean of the cathedral chapter. Comendador, who had recently had an outstanding demonstration of the power of his protectress, seized the occasion to have everyone within his sphere of influence baptized. The visit took on the air of a revival meeting, with eighty or a hundred baptisms a day, and since each convert made a gift of "a fowl or a fish," the Spaniards lived high. When they left, one *compañero* accepted a pressing invitation to remain as religious instructor of the Macacans; in view of what he had been through, one can understand that the offer had considerable appeal.

When the bachiller and the procuradores got to Santo Domingo, they undoubtedly heard from Hojeda a detailed account of his adven-

tures after leaving San Sebastián. Even for the Indies, where travel and expeditions were born to trouble, they had been sufficiently unpleasant to occasion considerable attention.

The Stolen Ship had come to grief in Cuba at Xagua (Cienfuegos), and her stranded company had taken the only course open to them: they had marched eastward along the shore in the general direction of Hispaniola. Almost immediately there had been conflict between Hojeda and Talavera, both of whom claimed command. Hojeda asserted that Talavera, having set himself up as captain, "tried to kill me"; Casas says that Hojeda was forced to walk in chains, which were removed only when his help was needed to repel Indian attackers, and gives a spirited account of the pugnacious little Governor offering to fight Talavera and his entire company—in pairs: "Come on, you double-crossing traitors, come on two at a time, and I'll fight the lot of you to the death!" On the other hand, someone (Esquivel?) charged that Hojeda had callously abandoned Talavera, taking with him the able-bodied members of the party.

Quite aside from these quarrels the journey along the Cuban coast had soon become pure nightmare, for the way was often marshy, yet they dared not leave the shore. Then the Big Swamp began. For the first days they expected to come through it as they had others; a week later, when it was impossible to consider turning back, they were still floundering in its dim mazes. Sometimes they waded, waist-deep; sometimes the bottom fell away beneath their feet. At night they wedged themselves into the twisted mangrove roots to seek "a most unquiet, sad, and bitter sleep." Hojeda, the "*devoto de la Virgen*," carried an image of the Madonna, cunningly worked in Flanders and very holy, which had been presented to him by Fonseca. A dozen times a day he propped the glowing figure before him, vowing that should they be saved by Her divine aid, he would offer the sacred likeness to the first village they encountered.

The heavenly mercy came at last, but only after thirty dreadful days in the swamp. Thirty-five men won through to solid ground and a blessed track which led to the village of Cueyba where, at the first bohíos, they collapsed. Fortunately the natives of Cueyba were unspoiled by prior contact with Christians; they took the Spaniards in, cared for them, and after a time guided them on to Macaca. Here

Comendador provided a seagoing canoe to take a messenger to Esquivel in Jamaica, and in due course a ship came to carry them to Esquivel's camp. In Jamaica, Hojeda was supposed to have a certain authority, particularly as the King had told Colón that he might send no more than an inspector to the island. But Esquivel, who knew he had Colón's backing, proceeded to behave like a governor, and even dared to arrest Hojeda as well as Talavera and to hold some kind of trial. Exactly what happened is obscure; at all events, Hojeda was in Santo Domingo before the first days of May, 1511.²

The Flemish Virgin stayed in Cueyba. The Indians built a shrine for Her, adorned with striped and painted cloths, and on festival nights, when her moon stood high above the pointed roofs, they composed little hymns in her praise, and danced in honor of the Queen of Heaven. Casas saw Her when he went that way two or three years later and, with less than his usual sensibility where the Indians were concerned, attempted to get the image in exchange for one he carried, "which was also holy, only not so much so." The proposal sent the cacique into hiding with his treasure, where, deaf to reassurance and excuses, he remained until Casas was safely out of his domain.

With Hojeda and Enciso both in Hispaniola the next development should have been a concerted effort to re-establish the gobernación of Urabá as originally planned. That nothing of the sort took place is a puzzle in two parts.

Until this time Hojeda undoubtedly meant to go back to Urabá. On May fifth he wrote a report to the King in which he stated his intention, asking for a prorogation of the time allotted for building the forts and for other assistance; about the same time Colón told Fernando that he was lending Hojeda a caravel to go to his concession. And from that date forward there is not a single reference to indicate that Hojeda had either rights or interest in his gobernación. The inference is that his withdrawal was the result of conversations with Enciso and the representatives of the colony, but it is hard to see why. Hojeda's contract still had two and a half years to run, and the chances of success were certainly brighter than when he left San Sebastián. A settlement had been established, and the King had confirmed that it was in his territory;³ the reports of gold were borne out by the present which Zamudio was taking to Fernando. And although over a hundred

and eighty Urabá recruits had been lost in one way or another, the men who had gone with Enciso and Colmenares and those from Nombre de Dios had more than made up for them.

One explanation often stated or implied—Hojeda's early death—can be ruled out. Alonso de Hojeda did not die until the end of 1515 or the early part of 1516. Nor was his health seriously affected; almost the only incident recorded of his last years is when he routed a number of footpads who waylaid him one dark night as he returned from a social evening, chasing them at full speed and pricking their flying rears with his sword. A more likely answer is that Colón decided that the time was ripe to insert a viceregal wedge in Tierra Firme, and took steps to eliminate Hojeda. In May he declared that he was helping Hojeda; a few months later the caravel had been lent to Valdivia, excessively damaging accusations against Hojeda had been forwarded to Spain, and Colón had confirmed Balboa as commander in Darién.

The other half of the riddle is the unobtrusiveness of Bachiller Enciso during the months he was in Santo Domingo. Usually a difficult person to ignore, he might not have existed. As chief justice of Urabá with a financial stake in the colony, as leader in the taking of Darién, he should have been much in evidence; as a man with a whole set of grievances, he should have been loudly proclaiming his wrongs. One can understand his silence about Nicuesa, a subject that everyone from Santa María, including the crew of the nao and the two priests, seems to have treated casually if at all. But why was he not now preferring the charges and demands of which he was afterwards so prodigal? Later he was to be an unforgiving accuser; why do we not find him taking action against the representatives of Darién while in Santo Domingo, when it would have been both logical and safe? The documents of the period which we possess give no hint of a solution, for the simple reason that they do not refer to him at all. Whatever the motive, the normally assertive bachiller appears to have been, during three or four crucial months in Santo Domingo, as retiring as any violet.

Partly because of this curious restraint, and partly for more positive reasons, the procuradores Valdivia and Zamudio were uncommonly successful. Representatives of an orphan colony to which Colón insisted he was *in loco parentis*, they found in the Young Admiral a

sympathetic friend. Colón immediately agreed to give Valdivia a ship and provisions, apologizing for the fact that he had only a very small caravel on hand at the moment and promising more substantial relief as soon as he could find ships for the purpose. Furthermore, he approved the colonists' request that Vasco Núñez be left in charge in Darién. In a formal document—of doubtful validity but great moral effect—he named Balboa acting captain of the colony, and entrusted the brevet to Valdivia for delivery.

The procuradores were still more fortunate in winning the support of Pasamonte, the Aragonese Treasurer of the Indies, who "had so much credit with the King that . . . almost all the disposition and government of the Indies was ordered according to his report and opinion." Pasamonte had a private cipher for communicating with Fernando and with Fernando's secretary, Lope de Conchillos (another Aragonese), and the King told him frankly that "there is no one [in Hispaniola] on whom I rely as on you."

In view of the Treasurer's influence on developments in Tierra Firme, it would be helpful to know if his opinions—which were positive but not always permanent—were as disinterested as Fernando believed. Unfortunately one cannot be sure. Pasamonte was described by his contemporaries as learned, prudent, wise, venerable, virtuous, "notably honest," and a force for good government; it was added that "he was believed to have been chaste all his life." He was also presented as a cynical, venal, and unscrupulous fellow who kept a harem of native girls of whom he was morbidly jealous. The second, and minority, opinion sounds like simple spite; nevertheless it was fairly generally rumored that the Treasurer was, if not exactly bribable, at least appreciative of timely gifts. If this were true, the story that Balboa and the council thoughtfully sent him a present of guanines by Zamudio was probably also true; it would have been only prudent to remember the susceptibilities of the King's right-hand man in the Indies. Conversely, it is improbable that the offering, if made, was what determined Pasamonte's attitude.

The Treasurer had his own reasons for supporting Balboa. An important, though undeclared, part of his duties in Hispaniola was to keep a curb on the Young Admiral (their momentary harmony over Darién was purely coincidental), and he realized that Hojeda and

Nicuesa, as aids to that end, were badly bent reeds. Hojeda, hung up in Santo Domingo without men or money, was in sufficiently bad case; Nicuesa, presumably back in Nombre de Dios, was in even worse one. Should the settlements in Tierra Firme be left leaderless, Colón would have an undeniable excuse for personal intervention. On this basis almost any recognized captain was better than no captain at all. Balboa—competent, popular, and independent—would be a most desirable stopgap, particularly as his appointment could be neatly removed from Colón's control by a duplicate brevet from the King.

Swimming with the current, the *procuradores* from Darién were able to finish their business in Hispaniola by the end of August. Valdivia left in the caravel provided by Colón a few days later, with food for Santa María and the brevet for Balboa. Martín de Zamudio sailed for Spain about September twelfth, on one of three ships which made port together in Castile before the middle of November. Happy in the knowledge that the same ships carried the official dispatches from Santo Domingo containing unanimous recommendations of the Darién colonists in general and Vasco Núñez de Balboa in particular, he probably was unworried by the fact that Bachiller Enciso, still under an eclipse, also went with the fleet to Castile.

King Fernando, ruler of Castile, Aragon, and southern Italy, fourth ranking sovereign of the Christian world, could not dedicate all his time and thought to Tierra Firme, or even to the New World colonies in general—a fact which sometimes escapes those who consider his conduct solely from the viewpoint of their own exclusive interest in the Indies. He had, however, thought a good deal about Urabá and Veragua, increasingly uneasy at the total lack of news from either colony. When the letters written in Hispaniola in January and February of 1511 merely confirmed the continuing blackout, he was seriously alarmed. "I am most worried over what may have happened," he wrote to Hojeda in June. "I am, and will be, in the greatest anxiety until I hear."

Two weeks later three packets of dispatches from Hispaniola were delivered to the royal officials in Seville. They had left Santo Domingo on May seventeenth in the care of Pedro de Arbolancha, Assistant Contador of Hispaniola and special emissary to the King, and they

included three letters from Colón as well as the first—and so far as is known, the last—reports from the Governors of Tierra Firme: Nicuesa's of November 9, 1510, and Hojeda's of May 5, 1511. The King was in Tordesillas, where he received them, together with a covering letter from the Casa officials, sometime after the middle of July.⁴

This was certainly news, but not the kind to set Fernando's mind at rest. It told nothing of what had passed in Urabá after Hojeda left San Sebastián, nearly a year before he made out his report, or in Veragua after early November of 1510; and from what it did tell the inference was inescapable that subsequent happenings had been unfortunate. Both Governors expatiated on their sufferings, on the perfidy of their subordinates, on the obstructiveness of Diego Colón; Hojeda denounced Talavera and Esquivel; Nicuesa complained that his Indians in Hispaniola had been confiscated. They were naturally reticent about their own shortcomings; nevertheless a discerning eye could see that neither Governor had been a wise commander, and that their intentions to proceed with their enterprises had slim chance of success.

Fernando replied to all the letters on July twenty-fifth. To Hojeda, as to Nicuesa, he was sympathetic but admonitory: the supplementary arms and armor requested would be supplied, "but you must pay the cost, because as you know, the contract with you has been entirely fulfilled"; Colón would be again instructed to collaborate, "and he will do so, because I am telling Pasamonte to attend to it"; unless valid objection were offered by the royal officials in Hispaniola, an extension would be granted of the time stipulated for building the forts. Talavera would be dealt with as he deserved, "but you must excuse much in similar uprisings, for when captains who lead people are eager to conduct themselves well, such things do not befall them." The King repeated his injunction to treat the Indians with kindness, and concluded on a paternal note: "Be ever careful and diligent . . . inform me very fully about everything . . . I will command that you be considered and favored."

A letter to the Young Admiral and the officials was less benign. It was not enough to have provided a caravel for Hojeda; they ought to have tried to secure loans for the colonies, and if unsuccessful should

have used money from the royal treasury "that those desperate people should not perish." They must give Hojeda and Nicuesa more valid assistance: placate their creditors, return their Indians, see that they get the utmost from Jamaica, and in general take every possible measure in support of the two gobernaciones. The officials had suggested that it might be advisable for the Crown to take over direct administration of the concessions; let them submit a plan, and it would be considered. For the meantime their duty was to save as much of the settlements and as many of the settlers as possible.

Diego Colón was hauled on the carpet in a separate dispatch stiff with displeasure. The King was "not satisfied"; the calamities in Tierra Firme lay in great part at Colón's door, for "it is held certain that had you dispatched that armada with the diligence and ability that was requisite and that I commanded of you, it would not have come to such harm." He must do his utmost to repair the damage and to compensate the Governors for the loss and inconvenience sustained. "Do this in such fashion," Fernando ended curtly, "that I may know from deeds the eagerness you say you have to serve me and carry out my commands."

Fernando rounded out a heavy day of correspondence with a cédula to the Casa de Contratación. "The defeat and ill-fortune suffered by the people in Tierra Firme has weighed upon me greatly," he wrote. "There seems to be nothing for it at present but to favor Nicuesa and Hojeda so that the collapse of what they have done should not be complete, until such time as we know whether there is gold in those wilds, and in what quantity, and what measures they might take to extract some profit from those regions." The Casa should send a ship with provisions to Urabá and Veragua and take steps to stimulate enlistment. "It seems to me," Fernando suggested, "that you ought to advertise . . . the great indications of gold . . . in addition to such other things as you see are apt to invite people to go to Tierra Firme." In the emergency the stringent emigration controls could be relaxed: "Do not insist, as heretofore, in wanting to know just who they are, particularly if they be laborers."

Six weeks later Fernando was wondering if it were any use attempting salvage. He had talked with Pedro de Arbolancha, the procurador of the Hispaniola colony who had brought the dispatches about

Veragua and Urabá. Arbolancha's information was, of course, no more recent than that of Hojeda and Nicuesa, but there was a lot more of it. The men who had reached Santo Domingo from Belén and San Sebastián—Ledesma and his crew, and those of the Hojeda-Talavera party who escaped—had talked, with the freedom and scorn of understatement common among survivors of desperate ventures, and the essence of what they said was that the concessions offered negligible profits at appalling cost. It is probable that Arbolancha was accompanied by some of these survivors; at all events, after hearing the oral accounts, the King wrote again to the Casa. "The Tierra Firme affair is most ruinous, and the route is long and little traveled," he said; "for this reason, do not be at pains to send ships with provisions for our account, but let some of the merchants go if they want to."

Arbolancha's opinion can be clearly deduced, and it carried weight. He was a trusted criado of the King; he had eighteen years' experience of the Indies; while serving as assistant contador of Hispaniola he had contrived to keep free of politics, enjoying the confidence of Pasa-monte, the good will of Colón, and the respect of the settlers—a truly notable achievement. But Fernando had other reasons for his new coolness toward the mainland concessions and, more particularly, the concessionaires. He had received written, though possibly unofficial, reports damning both Governors, including a virulent attack on Hojeda which smells strongly of Esquivel, or rather, of Colón labeled as Esquivel.

The Governor of Urabá was accused of conniving with Talavera to steal the ship; of tormenting friendly Indians; of executing and mutilating his own men without trial; of indiscriminate looting and wholesale rape; of declaring he would seize bread and ships in Hispaniola, San Juan, and Jamaica, and finally, of threatening to behead Colón and to abduct Colón's wife Doña María de Toledo. The charges were grotesque; on the other hand, it was always possible that, under the strain of successive disasters, Hojeda had gone mad. Much upset, Fernando passed the accusations on to the newly appointed appellate judges of Hispaniola, ordering them to see that justice was done.⁵

Nearly two years had now passed since Nicuesa and Hojeda had left Hispaniola for their gobernaciones, during which nothing had been heard from or of the concessions which was not distressing, vexatious,

or both. Thus when the procurador, Zamudio, arrived with his reports, supported by the emphatic recommendations of Colón and Pasamonte, the effect was immediate. The officials of the Casa forwarded the dispatches to the King on November seventeenth by the courier Collantes. Collantes, who was something of an institution in Castile, was evidently told to rush the mail pouch through, and years of shuttling between Seville and the temporary abodes of the Court had kept him in training. A one-man Pony Express, he averaged better than seventy miles a day in the saddle, and handed the dispatches to Fernando's secretary on the morning of November twenty-third—"at 11 A.M.," His Highness noted, struck by the speedy delivery.

Zamudio followed less precipitously, starting from Seville on December third and reaching Burgos two weeks or so later. He presented the letters and petitions from the colonists of Santa María, the gold ornaments, the report from Quicedo, and his own oral relation, in a pre-warmed atmosphere of satisfaction and approval. Within a few days the King had taken steps to suspend the Urabá concession as such. Hojeda was ordered to leave everything and return to present himself at Court, and Balboa was formally confirmed Governor of Darién.

After further thought Fernando concluded that the gobernación of Veragua should be written off, and the remnant of Nicuesa's expedition incorporated with the Darién colony. Nicuesa was recalled to Spain, and his men (with the exception of Olano) were advised to go to Santa María del Antigua, placing themselves under Balboa's command. Olano was to come to Castile for examination of his case. Balboa and the officers of Santa María were instructed to receive the men of Veragua with comradely consideration, "because otherwise I shall be annoyed, and dispose differently as is most conducive to our service."

If this last phrase is an allusion to the hostility toward Nicuesa, it is the only such reference to be found in the cédulas of this period. And since the King knew what had occurred, his silence on the subject is an eloquent expression of opinion. Also, because Fernando always tried to be fair, it indicates that no one spoke up to defend the ex-Governor, and much less to accuse the Darienites of deliberately sending him to perish in a leaky bergantín. In this regard it may be

remarked that Enciso had been in Spain for three and a half months when the dispositions concerning the Veragua gobernación were made.

The cédulas which recalled Hojeda and approved Balboa as his successor in Darién were dated December 23, 1511, in Burgos.

"I have seen what the officials of Hispaniola wrote," Fernando told those of Seville, ". . . how, until arrangements are made from here, the people of Darién have resolved to take as governor and alcalde mayor one Vasco Núñez de Balboa, a person with whom they say everyone is content. I also saw your opinion on this, in which you say that they decided well, and I intend to dispose accordingly, to the effect that the said [Balboa] remain in that office until such time as I order otherwise and appoint someone else, which will be done." This was at the end of November; it was only after the King had listened to Zamudio and read Quicedo's letter that his intention crystallized in a royal brevet naming Balboa Captain and interim Governor of Darién.

The decree, the existence of which was long in question, was first published by Altolaquirre y Duvalé in 1914; and although Altolaquirre does not remark it, there are some odd circumstances connected with it. (What appears in the printed text to be the oddest—a date line from Zaragoza—is only a transcriber's mistake; the document is dated from Burgos.) Why did the King, writing to Diego Colón on the same day the brevet was signed, say nothing about the appointment and limit himself to the remark that he would make arrangements for Tierra Firme as might appear most convenient? Why, when he wrote again to Colón a month later, did he say only that "it was a good measure that you took, that Vasco Núñez remain in charge there for now, until someone be provided from here"? He was equally reticent in letters of the next months. And—since if Fernando did not trust Colón he had other channels of communication—how was it that Balboa knew nothing of his appointment until the middle of 1513, although he had received cédulas of later date six months before?

Having registered these nagging question marks, to be returned to later on, we can consider the decree which rewarded Zamudio's mission and Balboa's dearest hopes:

The king. For the present, until such time as we command that a governor and court of law be provided for the province of darien

which is in the tierra firme of the yndias of the ocean sea, it is my pleasure and will, considering the competence and ability and fidelity of you vasco nuñez de valboa and knowing that it will be to our service, that you be our governor and captain of the said island and province and judicial authority in it. And by this my cedula I command that whatever persons of whatever estate condition pre-eminence or dignity they may be who are or might be in the said province of darien, shall have and hold and accept you during the said time as our captain and governor of it, and shall treat with you in all cases and matters pertaining to the said office of governor, and that they shall behave towards you and execute and obey your commands in all things as to our governor. For the exercise of the said mandate in the form stated above and for the execution and performance of it, I give you by this my cedula complete authority with all accessory and dependent rights thereto adjoint or conjoint, *e los unos ni los otros no fagades ende al.*⁶ Done in burgos xxiiij day of december of the year dxi I the king—by command of his highness / lope conchillos countersigned by the bishop

The investiture, for obvious reasons, was a temporary expedient limited to the colony in Darién. Royal governors were not chosen lightly or on hearsay; Colón's claim to Tierra Firme had yet to be judged by the Royal Council, and there had been no time to consider so important a reform as the organization of Urabá and Darién as a Crown colony. Within its confines, however, the brevet was unequivocal. For such time as it remained in force, Balboa was endowed with supreme power—civil, judicial, and military—in the exercise of which he was responsible, not to Colón, but directly to the King.

The decree must have been dispatched in proper course; Fernando's subsequent cédulas to Balboa addressed him as "Our Captain" in the identical form which had been used for Hojeda and Nicuesa. Somehow it was delayed in transit, for it was not delivered in Santa María until 1513. Had it been known earlier in Darién, the colony would have been saved much bitterness; perhaps the smoldering enmities which broke out later would never have been kindled.

IX

IN Santa María del Antigua the months which followed Nicuesa's departure were so unwontedly gratifying that it seemed as if the wretched Governor had taken the bad luck of the colony with him. The vecinos felt that they had at last turned the corner—happily unaware that, for them, corners were to be only an infrequent punctuation to long stretches of misfortune.

For some time the men had been restless in the narrow confines of the settlement, eager to explore and exploit fresh fields. Balboa, "who could not sit still even while his bread was baking," was as impatient as the rest; besides, he knew that idle, well-fed *compañeros* meant trouble. An expedition was clearly indicated: one of those *entradas* which so usefully combined duty, profit, and Christian propaganda, while keeping the colonists occupied and out of mischief. The undertaking had been planned, and a goal decided upon, before Nicuesa arrived, and no sooner was Bachiller Enciso out of the way than it was put into effect. The objective was Careta, the next chiefdom to the north, about eighty miles away by land and twenty less by sea.

Balboa may have remembered Careta—it is uncertain whether Bastidas visited it on his voyage of discovery—or it may have been selected simply because it was at once the easiest and the most promising district to reach from Darién. The colonists undoubtedly had been told about the swamps and savage inhabitants of the Atrato Valley to the south, and the barriers of sea and mountain lay east and west. In any case, the latter direction was guarded by Cemaco, and a scouting party led by Pizarro toward the chief's retreat had limped back in bad shape after an encounter with his forces. (They told a tall tale of the havoc they had wrought among the enemy, but Balboa did not congratulate them. He gave Pizarro a dressing-down for having abandoned a comrade, and sent him back to get the wounded *compañero*, who justified the rescue by recovering.) Careta, on the other hand, could be reached with little difficulty, and its ruler was reported to be both more important and less bellicose than his confrere of

Darién. Balboa mustered a hundred men and set out in late April or early May of 1511.

Careta, like Darién, consisted of a strip of territory between the summit of the coastal range and the Caribbean. Its principal port was that inside Punta Sasardí,¹ and its capital lay in the hills some twelve to fourteen miles inland. The Spaniards, following their usual confusing custom, referred to the port, the chiefdom, the principal village, and the ruler, indiscriminately, as "Careta," but the chief's real name was Chima. Chima could boast two thousand warriors, and it was fortunate for the expeditionaries that when they made their entrada he was engaged in hostilities with Ponca, a hill chieftain whom the Caretaes considered a barbarian, and who, like so many barbarians, was extremely hard to subdue. The situation, when Balboa arrived, seems to have reached an uneasy stalemate.

Every conquistador was avid for treasure, but for the men of Darién the prime consideration at this time was food. "We have held provisions in more account than gold," Balboa told the King, "for we have had more gold than health"; and, having taken Careta village with little effort, food was the first thing they demanded of the chief. Chima protested that he had none to give; the war with Ponca had hindered the sowing, and other Spaniards had taken his reserve supplies. This was construed, rightly or wrongly, as a mere excuse, and the chief with his whole family was put under arrest.

(The "other Spaniards" must have been Enciso and his fellow travelers, who, since they took sixteen days to make Cuba in a favorable voyage, clearly stopped off somewhere en route.)

As has already been noted, there are frequently two or three main versions and several sub-versions of events in Tierra Firme, and the occupation of Careta is a pretty example of history by hearsay. The chroniclers agree, however, that Balboa found helpful compatriots already installed there: three of Nicuesa's men who had deserted on the way to Veragua, and found refuge and rank with the Indians. They had adapted themselves to their new environment without reserve, and prospered in the process. One, named Juan Alonso, had been made captain of Chima's warriors, and all were "as naked as the Indians and as plump as the capons that housewives fatten in their cellars." These unanticipated friends were extremely useful to Vasco

Núñez, but whether this was solely by amicable liaison work or whether there was cynical betrayal of the chief on the part of Juan Alonso, is a matter of which chronicler you read.²

On the evidence, the most benign account appears the most credible. According to this, Balboa released the chief and his family as soon as he learned of the kindness shown to the refugee Spaniards, and cordial relations were immediately established. Certainly Chima became Balboa's devoted friend and adherent from that time forth, and it is hard to believe that a proud chieftain would have fallen on the neck of an invader who, having defeated him by treachery, subsequently ill-treated him. Eager to please, the chief also embraced the Christian faith, and as the first important convert was baptized with the name of the Catholic King. Thereafter, Chima was officially Don Fernando to his conquerors.

Conducted to Santa María as a hostage, Chima-Don Fernando remained as a guest. When he left, it was as a liege ally. He had concluded a pact with Balboa—whom he called *Tibá* (great chief)—with which both sides were immensely pleased. The Caretaes were bound to clear and plant land near the settlement, to help out with food from their own stocks until harvest time, to serve as guides when necessary, and to make themselves generally useful; Balboa, for his part, promised to take a force against Chima's enemy Ponca, and mop him up to the mutual satisfaction of both contracting parties. Considering that the chief had paid a handsome tribute in gold, the advantage seems to have been heavily on the side of the colonists, but Chima was entirely content. He was free, he had not been pressed for more gold than he had been prepared to contribute, and he was about to be relieved of the harrying raids of Ponca's mountaineers.

Before long, Chima returned to his village to see to the planting and to dispatch laborers to Darién. Before he left he sealed his alliance with Vasco Núñez by the closest tie he knew—he gave a daughter to the white *tibá*.

No one has described this living pledge of friendship, or even given her a name. She was very young, and, it is said, beautiful. She was not Balboa's only love—for which he had reason to be thankful later on—and because of her few years she lived in his house for some time as his ward. But she grew up to be both desirable and constant, and

because of these qualities she was to be, in the end, an instrument in his death.

Vasco Núñez sent what provisions he could spare to the garrison in Nombre de Dios on two occasions, and finally brought all the survivors of Nicuesa's settlement to Darién. The first relief seems to have been dispatched before the start of the *Careta* entrada, and the bergantines returned with distressing news of the Veragua colonists. "If I had not succored them," Balboa wrote to the King, "they were already lost, for five or six were dying every day from hunger, and the Indians were closing in on them." In addition, they had been quarreling among themselves, principally over the scanty rations, which the *alcalde*, Alonso Núñez, and Gonzalo de Badajoz doled out in microscopic quantities; before the third trip of the bergantines from Darién the rank and file had seized both the provisions and the officers. By this time it was evident that Nicuesa was not going to turn up in time to save them, and they asked nothing better than another home and a new commander. By July or August the last of them were in Santa María del Antigua.

In August, land for crops and grazing, and urban lots for building were apportioned among the *vecinos*, the men of Veragua sharing on equal terms with the others; early in September the corn was planted. With the settlement thus organized, Balboa set out to fulfill his agreement with Don Fernando, transporting his force as far as Puerto Careta in the bergantines.

Ponca lay west of Careta village, on the other side of a low but rugged pass. Its river—every chief was lord of a river—was probably the Moretí (Mortí), a fork of the Chucunaque. There was a trail of sorts over the pass, which the Spaniards were to know almost as well as the streets of Santa María in years to come, but it was hard going for white soldiers, and the colonists scrambled rather than marched for two days to reach their destination. Their laborious progress was noted, and Chief Ponca, wisely deciding that this was a moment for discretion rather than valor, had gathered his people and taken to the forest before they arrived. The *compañeros* ransacked the deserted *bohíos*, found a tidy amount of gold overlooked in the hasty evacuation, and burned the village.

The Ponca affair had not been heroic, but Chima was delighted. He now proposed to negotiate a visit to Chief Comogre, whose domain, called Comogra, adjoined his own on the north. Comogre was out of the Ponca class; he was a powerful ruler who commanded numerous vassal lords and headmen and had three thousand fighting men. He was on good terms with Careta, and Chima wished to keep him that way, so that on all counts it was advisable to treat with him in proper diplomatic fashion. The ambassador chosen to approach him was a *jura*—a noble of princely blood—who had once lived in Comogra, and who had learned to like the Spaniards when Nicuesa's deserters stayed in his house after their escape from the armada. He carried out his mission admirably.

The state of Comogra extended from the Caribbean across the mountains to the Bayano River, and along the coast from the bay now labeled Mazargandí to Playón Grande or beyond. Its capital was on the fork of the Bayano known as Matumagantí, where the forested hills gave way to the relatively thickly populated central valley—now unbroken jungle, but then in great part open land where the principal villages, connected by trails, were often no more than six to ten miles apart. Comogra had two "ports," and in later years the colonists sometimes entered by that not far from Mazargandí, which they called Puerto Perdido. But the favored route from Careta was through Ponca, thence from the headwaters of the Chucunaque over the divide to the Quiquimipití (or Quiquinibutí), down this to the Río Cañazas and on to an affluent called Navagantí, up the Navagantí eleven miles to a creek, and then twenty miles overland to the Matumagantí. (The river names are all of more recent date than that of the Darién colony.) According to a later report, the total distance was about a hundred and forty miles; one can only suppose that the shorter route via Puerto Perdido was exceptionally arduous.

Balboa's entry into Comogra had the feudal flavor of a suzerain's visit to a puissant vassal prince. Some way outside the capital he was met by the chief in person, accompanied by his seven sons and by all the local gentry. It was an elegant, not to say an imposing, reception. A Comogran notable dressed in his best was splendid from the skin out: his body freshly painted with designs in black and red, a fringed cotton tunic falling below his knees, and on his head a diadem of

woven cane and feathers. In his nose and ears, around his neck, clasping his arms and legs, he wore as many ornaments as he could afford and was physically able to carry without undue fatigue. The chief was, of course, even more ornate. His ornaments were larger, richer, and heavier; graduated necklaces of jaguar teeth lay in a zigzag pattern on his chest; he wore a golden crown and carried a slender scepter made of gold.

After an exchange of compliments, translated by Juan Alonso, the guests were escorted to the village. For once the Spaniards were frankly impressed. The green meadows of Comogra were a grateful sight to eyes long held to mountain and jungle, and the spaced bohíos were numerous and well built, but what struck the *compañeros* speechless was the palace of the chief. This super-bohío was a hundred and fifty paces long by eighty wide, constructed of heavy timbers, the upper part made of wood cunningly interlaced to form a kind of loft; its beams were carved and its floor "artistically decorated." The building was surrounded by a stone wall. Nothing to approach it in size and craftsmanship had yet been seen in the Indies, and the colonists gazed on it marveling and somewhat daunted.

The inside of the palace was in keeping with its exterior. It was partitioned into a great many rooms and corridors, and Comogre saw that his visitors were shown them all. They were even taken to the "very secret" Hall of the Ancestors, which was hung with the mummies of departed chiefs. Wrapped in cloth of painted cotton woven with gold, pearls, and "stones held precious," their shriveled faces covered with golden masks, the fire-dried bodies swung gently from ropes fixed to the roof, like rich bales of goods in a spectral warehouse. Death was a familiar story to Balboa and his men, but the mausoleum made them uncomfortable, and they were relieved to move on to more congenial storerooms: those in which the chief kept provisions and liquors.

Here were stores to make a colonist's mouth water: piles of corn, white, yellow, red, and purple; woody-looking yucca and *arracacha* roots; turnip-like *ajes* and mounds of those little orange-colored potatoes that make ordinary white ones seem insipid; peanuts and *cápera* seeds; green and red *ajís*; coconuts, pineapples, *anones*, and less familiar fruits; smoked venison and pork, dried fish, corn meal in

baskets, bundles of herbs. Another room held ollas and jars of maize beer and a surprising assortment of wines, "both white and red."

That evening there was a banquet. The Indians lived rather sparsely as a rule, but they were always happy to have warrant for a rousing feast, and this was an Occasion. For the still more spare-living colonists, it was a revelation. Better-nourished men than they would have found it memorable, thanks to Comogre's dual determination to dazzle his guests and at the same time win their regard.

No one, alas, has described this particular feast in detail, but from gleanings here and there in letters and chronicles it can be pretty faithfully reconstructed. There was nothing exotic about the menu, which consisted of soup, fish, game, meat, vegetables, bread, fruit, and wines; many of the recipes which have come down to us sound as familiar as yesterday's lunch. The quantity and diversity of the dishes would, however, put a modern provider to shame: half a dozen kinds of fish, boiled, roasted, and grilled; meats for every taste; a succession of wines, and three times as much of everything as could be consumed at a sitting. The food was placed in calabashes and on leaves, ranged down the center of trestle tables, and each place was set with a bowl of water, a small lump of salt, and a drinking cup. Some of the cups were of fiber, incredibly finely woven; the most beautiful were made of small, highly polished gourds lavishly trimmed with gold.

It is to be hoped that the Spaniards did not forget their manners before this unaccustomed plenty, for the Indians were rather careful of the niceties. Each man removed his more encumbering ornaments and his nose ring before sitting at the table. The technique for eating such things as stews without implements was to make a spoon of two curved fingers, dip a little out of the common bowl, and pop it into the mouth with a rapid sidewise motion as if passing the fingers across the lips. Before the next dip, fingers were rinsed in the individual finger bowls. How the colonists managed one can only guess; no doubt they were awkward enough to give rise to a good deal of the laughter that came so easily to Indians unspoiled by fear. There were frequent toasts of the bottoms-up sort, and as the cups were drained the attendant women took them away and washed them before refilling them.

All this, delightful as it was, constituted no more than a garnish to

the solid satisfactions of the visit. The white tibá secured three prizes: a formal alliance, clinched by baptism of the chief, who was christened Don Carlos after the Spanish heir apparent; a gratifying present of gold and seventy slaves by way of tribute; and, best of all, the sensational information that another ocean lay just the other side of the range of hills visible to the south.

The news was not, of course, a bolt from the blue. The existence of seas beyond the known Atlantic was generally recognized, since Asia looked on them and Tierra Firme was not Asia. For that matter, Columbus had reported that another sea could be reached in only nine days' march from Chiriquí Lagoon; the odd thing is that this intelligence, which was perfectly correct, did not feature in the contract made with Nicuesa, even though the chief desideratum was an uninterrupted water route.³ One can only suppose that Columbus' unfortunate insistence that Honduras was China, and the Isthmus the Malay Peninsula, from whose farther side the river Ganges was but a ten-day sail, discredited all his geographical conclusions.

Balboa does not appear to have considered the startling implications of what he had learned. At any rate, when he reported it to the King it was without (so far as is known) any reference to the Orient. One reason was probably the direction indicated; the Pacific is indeed south of the middle Isthmus, hence its first name of "the South Sea," and everyone knew that Asia was to the west. Moreover, he was neither an inspired dreamer nor a savant, but a practical, practicing conquistador concerned like his men with opportunities he and they might grasp. The proximity of another sea was thrilling news, but what was of immediate, absorbing interest was the assurance that its coast was inhabited by chiefs of fantastic wealth.

Their informant was Comogre's eldest son, "a wise young man" named Ponquiaco, who had been thoughtfully considering his father's visitors. His conclusions were brought to a head by a regrettable scene which reflects no credit on the colonists. They had been weighing the gold presented by Comogre—a proceeding which must have appeared crude to the Indians, who valued workmanship far more than mass—in order to set aside the quinto and apportion what was left among themselves, and in the course of the operation some lively disagreements had developed. Ponquiaco watched them disgustingly and de-

cided that such appetites were best directed away from Comogra.

Sending the scales flying with a sweep of his hand, the young Indian addressed the *compañeros* as they gaped above the bright objects scattered on the ground. Martyr remarks that his language was choice, and if it was anything like the polished periods which the chronicler puts in quotes, the adjective was deserved.

"What then is this, Christians?" Ponquiaco's speech began. "Is it possible that you set so high a value on so little gold? Yet you destroy the artistic beauty of these necklaces, melting them into ingots. If your thirst for gold is such that to satisfy it you molest peaceable people and bring misfortune and calamity among them, if you exile yourselves from your own country to search for it, I will show you a land where it abounds and where you can satisfy your thirst . . ." There was much more of this, and few orators have had a more enthralled audience, or, for that matter, one which paid so little attention to style and delivery and so much to what they considered the meat of the subject.

The other ocean, it was learned, was only three suns' march from the hills bordering the farther side of the Bayano Valley, and the hills could be reached from Pocosora, the next province west of Comogra, in a single day. The direction indicated gave the conquistadores their name for the Pacific: the South Sea. And everywhere—everywhere beyond Comogra—there was gold, both raw and worked, as common as iron in Biscaya. Ponquiaco's talents as a promoter were considerable.

All the rivers of the southern watershed rolled gold in fat grains; every chief was opulent. Pocosora was very rich; his neighbor, Tubanamá, was even richer; the chiefs of the sierra were obliged to store their treasure on racks because it was too voluminous for mere baskets, and those of the other coast possessed such fabulous collections of wrought gold that sight of them "would make us go out of our minds." As for pearls, so many of them were gathered in the islands—easily reached by canoe on that always calm sea—that no Indian was without them. The Spaniards would need a thousand men to vanquish the "mighty kings" who would try to bar their way, but Ponquiaco himself would be charmed to guide an expedition, and to provide a Comogran contingent as auxiliaries.

The Indian was not speaking of the Inca Empire, although that is what Casas deduced, to the confusion of later historians. He was talking about tribes he knew, "people who go naked and live as we do," with whom Comogra had warred and traded for generations. The mighty kings were the chiefs of Pocorosa and Tubanamá, a little way down the valley, traditional enemies whose decisive defeat was Ponquiaco's frankly avowed reason for co-operation. The chieftains of the sierra, cannibal invaders who had conquered the hill tribes in order to exploit their mines, lived near enough for regular commerce by way of the Cañazas, a fork of the Bayano. And in describing the pleasant, mannerly magnates of the other coast, who abstained from eating the slaves they got by barter, the Indians of Comogra meant those living along the shore of the Isthmus toward the west—which is all that Balboa and his men understood them to mean.

For the colonists it was quite enough. They stayed only a few days more in Comogra, checking and completing the information received, and then returned to Darién in soaring spirits with their slaves and gold. When they got there, they found that Valdivia had already arrived from Santo Domingo with almost everything needed to complete their felicity: a few volunteers, enough food for present satisfaction, the promise of generous help soon to come, and Colón's approval of Vasco Núñez de Balboa as captain of the colony. Decidedly, the tide of fortune was setting their way.

Thus in November of 1511, Santa María del Antigua was a cheerful place. There was still discomfort—it rained incessantly, many people were sick, and Valdivia's small supply of food was quickly exhausted—but the vecinos bore their trials with good humor and a phenomenal absence of internecine squabbles. Hope is more than bread or ease, and in Darién hope seemed very close to certainty. There would be plenty in the settlement: the promised relief would soon be there, and the corn was already high. There would be wealth for everyone, for the news gathered in Comogra, once known in Hispaniola, would surely bring the necessary reinforcements.

Indeed, the colonists had reason for congratulation. They had shelter, slaves, field labor, growing crops; they were assured of official favor; they were free of undesired commanders and also, apparently, of censure for having got rid of them. The man they had themselves

chosen had been confirmed as captain. They could count on two of the strongest chiefs as (in the vague but convenient terminology of dominion) subordinate allies—a guarantee of security and a promise of future assistance. And there was over sixty thousand pesos of gold in the treasury.

X

LARGELY because Colón, for reasons of his own, did not follow up his initial burst of encouragement for Darién, it was to be nearly two years before the settlers were able to act on the information received in Comogra. And even when they did, and when the Pacific had been discovered and the colony strengthened, the establishment of Spanish rule in the Isthmus was a creeping process.

Had Tierra Firme been a sparsely inhabited territory with lands empty for the taking, or alternatively, had it been organized in subjection to only one or two absolute rulers, its conquest could have been relatively easy. But it was settled country—the pre-Columbian population of the Isthmus alone was greater than that of North America from Mexico to the Arctic Circle—and it was composed of a mosaic of separate states, each with its sovereign chief. Some of the chiefdoms were little more than hunting and fishing preserves, some were so developed as to impress invaders still mindful of the duchies and fiefs of Europe, and every one of them had to be tackled as a distinct unit.

It is obvious that this political incoherence, while providing an ideal setup for plundering raids, did not lend itself to decisive actions effective over large blocks of territory. Balboa, it is true, obtained friendly suzerainty over thirty “provinces,” creating a zone wherein the Indians were “like lambs” and “five or ten Christians, or one alone, could travel as safely as a thousand.”¹ But this nucleus was lost when Governor Pedrarias and his cohorts came to scourge the tribes to revolt. The subjection of the heathen is seldom a gentle business; in Tierra Firme, where each small subdivision presented a fresh

problem, it was an untidy, bloody business of destruction and piecemeal seizure.

In some districts—specifically, the Atrato Basin—the conquistadores' worst hazard was the land itself, defiant then as now of the white man and all his works. At times luck (usually bad luck) decided the issues. In general, however, it was the human factor which determined the course and quality of conquest. The virtues and defects of the Spaniards, their habits and preconceptions, are demonstrated at every turn, but they are only one quantity in the equation. It is time to look at the other: at the Indians. We will do so through the eyes of the colonists, who observed more than might be suspected from most modern anthropological studies.

The settlers knew nothing of the minutiae of ethnology. All Indians were sons of Ham (they themselves stemmed from Japheth), who "retained some Judaic vestiges from their ancient progenitors," and whose ramifications since Ararat were of minor importance.² But although their interest and descriptions were anything but scientific, they were authentic, and they are preserved by Oviedo, Andagoya, and to some degree by Casas and Martyr.

Of the inhabitants of the southern mainland the colonists did not have much to tell. They learned little of Cenú save the inconvenient military prowess of its warriors, and dismissed the equally recalcitrant natives of Urabá and much of the Atrato as incurably evil down to the last predestined infant. They say enough, however, to confirm the distribution of racial groups. The Indians of Cenú, the "province" which occupied the upper and middle valley of the river Sinú, were Carib, and so were those of Urabá,³ the Cordillera, the upper Atrato and most of the Pacific coast south of the Isthmus: comparatively civilized in Cenú (the Catío Caribs),⁴ savagely primitive in the west (Citaraes, Chocoas). Those around the mouth of the Sinú were of a different race—perhaps Arawak, since the Arawak word for "chief," *guaxiro*, was sometimes heard in Darién, though expressly defined as a foreign term. The lower Atrato Valley was Cuna; Abibaibe, Abraibe, Dabaibe, Abanumaque, Abraime were Cuna words. Bea and Corobari, along the delta between Darién and Abraime, were Carib again—strangely softened and unusually attractive, using neither poisoned arrows nor bitter manioc, and apparently intermixed with Cuna, but

still basically Carib on the evidence of their place names and the one or two words of their language which are recorded.⁵

The Indians of the mountain chiefdoms on the other side of the divide from Darién and Corobari were a mixed lot, many of them ruled by fairly recent "barbarian" invaders from farther south. Rather curiously, there is no mention whatever of any natives living between Santa María and Careta.

Naturally enough, the settlers' information was mostly about the tribes with whom they had constant contact, those living in the territory from the lower delta to the south-central Isthmus, and especially about those of Cueva—the Indians they knew best, treated worst, and admired even as they destroyed them.

Cueva, in colonial parlance, was one of three main divisions of the Isthmus, the other two being Veragua and Coiba. Although the name "Cueva" is often used as if it applied to the whole eastern Isthmus, this is not strictly correct. It was a linguistic rather than a geographical definition; that is, its people all spoke, with local variations, "the language of Cueva." Its heart-land was the valley of the Bayano and its farther limit was the Bay of Capiara, and the province of Peruquete, some twenty-five miles west of Panamá. Cueva proper did not include the Caribbean coast westward from Nombre de Dios, or the Pacific slopes west of Darién, although the tribes living in proximity to the Gulf of San Miguel were nearly all Cuevan. Veragua, in its narrowest sense a single chiefdom on the river of that name and in its widest a gobernación which extended far north to Cape Gracias á Dios, was by now commonly taken to be the Caribbean slope between Nombre de Dios and Almirante Bay. As for Coiba, the word merely signified "far away" or "far-off place," and had been adopted by the Spaniards from an early misunderstanding of the remarks of Atlantic-coast Indians. It began where "the language of Cueva" ended, its boundary with Veragua was the crest of the mountains, and its farther limits were unknown; its peoples spoke a variety of tongues and sometimes differed sharply in physical traits from one province to the next. Some of them, perhaps most, seem to have been of Nahuatlteca stock.

The "Cuevans" are not only the Indians of whom most is told; they are also the most intriguing, partly because of their relatively high culture and partly because their racial affiliations are unestablished.

This does not mean that they have not been assigned to a racial group; modern ethnology has, in fact, assigned them to several—Arawak, Chibcha, and more commonly Cuna. But the very widely adopted Cuna identification is at least questionable, aside from the fact that the origin of the Cunas themselves is a matter of controversy. The Cuevans lived next door to Cunas and had constant intercourse with them, but their social structure was entirely different, and so was their language. No philologically minded colonist compiled a Cuevan grammar, but the small vocabulary that has been preserved is perfectly instructive on this point. The Cunas certainly inherited the earth in the Isthmus as far as San Blas, but the process started after Darién was only a memory.

The trouble is that a good many students have been misled by early sources which are not early enough. Here are some of the recorded changes in the distribution of peoples before 1535: The Urabae had retired to the hills of Abibe and their land had been occupied by the Indians of Bea and Corobarí; Urabaibe was deserted; the Chuchureíes, tall, light-skinned people "from Honduras way" who were in possession around Nombre de Dios in 1515, had been wiped out; the Pearl Islands, well populated at the time of their discovery, were uninhabited; Caribs from the high country "just back of Darién" had moved south to seize the region around the Gulf of Cúpica and were already menacing the Cuevan states around the Gulf of San Miguel. Careta, which could muster two thousand fighting men in 1511, was reduced to a few people in the more inaccessible hill country. The Cuevans were well on the way to extinction; the great chiefs who could boast five thousand warriors when the Spaniards came had no more than five hundred or a thousand subjects all told.

According to their conquerors, the Cuevans (the unscientific term must serve in lieu of a better) were an uncommonly handsome lot: well formed, straight, swift and supple in movement, with good features and skins of a tawny golden color. In fact their only defect seems to have been their teeth, which were almost uniformly bad. The men were taller and sturdier, "more men," than those of the Antilles. It might have been added that the women were more women; for they appear to have been charming creatures who displayed unexpected aspects of sophistication. Smallish, large-eyed with thick and often

wavy hair, they had beautiful narrow bodies of which they were inordinately proud and on which they lavished endless care. They bathed five or six times a day and spent hours grooming their hair with combs of macaw wood; they applied perfumed ointments to keep their skins smooth and unblemished, and removed every trace of body hair with depilatories and tweezers. They took extraordinary care to preserve the shape of their admirable breasts; the wealthier matrons used brassieres of intricately worked gold, "for they thought it shameful to have a wrinkled or flabby bosom."

The younger women, believing firmly in enjoying life and maintaining their girlish figures, often achieved that difficult combination of aims via herbal contraceptives or, in the last necessity, an abortive. There was nothing furtive about this; the girls' frankly expressed attitude was that youth is for fun and freedom—"let the older women have children." Either their fears of losing their beauty were groundless, or nature and art together served them well: it was noted that even after childbirth they were like adolescents.

The Europeans who remarked these qualities usually had every reason to know whereof they spoke, but even a casual observer could not miss much. The sole garment, a wrapped *enagua* of brightly colored cotton rather like a sarong, covered ladies of quality from waist to ankle, but on less exalted women it came only to the thigh, and young girls were apt to dispense with it altogether, "for as they do not know what shame is, so they do not use any defense for it." This happy ignorance was reflected in their behavior, which was apparently similar to that noted by a later observer, a British pirate: "They are very modest, and tho' they will lay hold on any Part of a Man, yet they do it with great simplicity and Innocence." One is reminded of the philosopher who asserted that what the world needed was less chastity and more delicacy.

The women showed a flattering preference for Spanish lovers, although they were inclined to snub mere *compañeros* in favor of men of higher rank, and an Indian mistress was generally faithful to her lord "if he be not long absent, for they have no desire to be widows or chaste nuns." And from the colonists' point of view there was much to be said for a ménage with an Indian girl, or possibly two Indian girls, if only for practical considerations. They were neat and com-

petent housekeepers, they served as interpreters and go-betweens, and their dispositions were beyond cavil.

Amiability, in fact, was a general characteristic, and so were good manners. Despite the tendency to intertribal fighting, the Cuevans very rarely quarreled among themselves, and if a disagreement did arise it was referred to the chief, who disposed of it by final decision within three days. The women carried out the most arduous tasks "cheerfully, and as if it were their pleasure," and the men were invariably gentle with them, being "kind and loving . . . even when drunk." No one ever heard a cross word between husband and wife.

Their villages were simple—Comogra was evidently the show place of Cueva—and even the capitals were small, for the Indians lived mostly in small groups near their fields. They were primarily an agricultural people, and cultivated not only numerous kinds of maize (their chief staple) but a variety of vegetables, herbs, and fruits, as well as a fine quality of cotton. They kept fowls (probably curassow, guan, and the like), domesticated peccary and various animals of the guinea-pig order. Their houses were rectangular and usually partitioned into several rooms, and both the surrounding ground and the dwellings themselves were scrupulously clean and tidy. Nor was the tidiness a matter of having nothing to keep in order; the Cuevans were quite civilized enough for the self-imposed servitude of possessions. Furniture was not complicated: a number of seats and taborets made of sections of log, some built-in racks, perhaps a platform bed near the fire, and a hammock for each member of the family down to the baby still strapped to its backboard. The problem was storage. In that climate almost everything had to be guarded from rain and insects, and the number of belongings to be taken care of was astonishing.

There was the bulky gear: hunting and fishing nets of different sizes and meshes, canoe paddles and poles, wooden hoes and planting sticks, the yokes and big covered baskets (*habas*) used for baggage on the trail, the tall ollas called *toreba* for water and maize beer, the loom and dye pots and grinding stones. There were weapons: heavy two-edged war clubs called *macana*, fashioned from the iron-hard wood of the black palm; spears for war or hunting, tipped with bone or shell, some of them with multiple barbs carved into the wood itself; throwing sticks known in Cueva as *estólica* (the *atlatl* of the Aztecs)

and darts to go with them—plain darts of wood or reed for business, and whistling ones for sport or mockery. (The Cuevans used neither bows nor blowguns.) There were skeins of cotton, *maho* and other fibers; bundles of reeds and split cane; bales of raw cotton, as well as all the pots, gourds, baskets, and utensils needed for keeping and preparing food. And to all these were added the innumerable small things that in a cupboardless, drawerless, closetless dwelling must have been a housewife's nightmare, such things as battens and shuttles, spindle, whorls, and distaff, clay rollers for printing fabrics, tools of bone, shell, and stone, cosmetics and medicines—not to mention articles of adornment, at thirty to fifty pounds of assorted ornaments per person.

The noble savage is frequently less egalitarian than is imagined, and the Cuevans had a strictly class society. The aristocracy was as follows: *queví* or *tibá*—paramount ruler; *saco*—minor chief or headman; *jura*—member of a reigning family; *çabra*—knight. The wives of all nobles bore the title *espave*; slaves were called *paco*. Çabras were so created for outstanding military merit; the action on which the honor was based had to take place in authorized combat under the chief's own eyes. All rank was hereditary, and passed to the eldest legitimate son; if there was no legitimate male issue it might go to a daughter, and, failing direct heirs, it passed to the son of a sister, for "the son of my sister is undoubtedly my [blood] nephew and the grandson of my father, but about the son or daughter of my brother there could be some question."

Nobles did not marry out of their class, although a chief might so far condescend as to take the daughter of a çabra as consort. The Cuevans practiced what might be called modified monogamy: that is, they had only one wife with whom they went through a nuptial ceremony, but the more affluent maintained a number of auxiliaries. The concubines were expected to serve the legal spouse and to make themselves generally useful about the house; they and their children inherited nothing on their lord's death, but were suitably taken care of by the recognized heirs.

The chief was supreme in peace or war. His decisions were unappealable, but they were not taken without consultation or, in the administration of justice, without a public trial. There was little crime,

perhaps because retribution was both rapid and severe. One of the gravest offenses was theft, for which the penalty was amputation according to a nicely graduated scale—a finger for petty pilferage, a hand for something more serious, and so on up to the maximum of both arms. The culprit was obliged thereafter to wear the late bit of his anatomy suspended from a cord about his neck, presumably until it dropped off from natural causes. Only the chief could execute sentence on a noble, although when capital punishment was called for he might limit himself to a symbolic blow and leave the *coup de grace* to the executioner. The guilty noble, and his family with him, lost rank in this world and the next.

The religion of Cueva was not exacting, and followed a more or less standard pattern. The Cuevans believed in a Creator named Chipirapa (or Chipipipa), a detached Being not incapable of error who confined his attentions to the weather; in the sun and moon as deities (the latter female, whereas the Cunas held the moon to be a male god); in a tutelary deity called Tuíra, who dispensed good and ill. The Spaniards admitted the existence of Tuíra, though not, of course, his divinity; he was clearly Satan in one of his many impersonations. This accounted for the accuracy of his prophecies, communicated through his priests. (When God took the trouble to give him the lie by upsetting the preordained course of events, the priests merely explained that Tuíra had changed his mind.) With typically diabolic cunning Tuíra manifested himself to his deluded people in a form calculated to please and reassure: he was seen as a beautiful boy-child with the feet of a bird. There was also a Cuevan version of the universal mother-and-child myth.

Medicine men were called *tequina*, a word meaning master, which was also given to master craftsmen or even to particularly skillful hunters. A tequina began his training as a child, proceeding to a long novitiate which concluded with a hermitage of two years in the forest. During these last years he ate nothing that contained blood, saw no woman, and talked only with the master who came at night to teach him the priestly mysteries. This completed, he was qualified as a practicing tequina and absolved from the bonds of abstinence, a freedom of which he took full advantage. When he invoked Tuíra and spoke with the voice of the god, or when he pronounced the spells and

exorcisms no layman might repeat, he inspired a fearful awe. As a healer, however, he leaned more on medicines than on incantations.

Tequinas did not have a monopoly as doctors; there were many wisewomen and "curers" who also knew how to treat the sick. The Indians had a remedy for almost every ill to which native flesh was heir, many of them extremely efficacious. The chroniclers' descriptions of some of these are echoed by the pirate doctor who was struck with the effect of a bitter-calabash enema in cases of "Torsions of the Guts, or Dry Gripes," and with the miraculous healing properties of certain herbal poultices applied to gaping wounds. And this only touched the fringe of the Indian pharmacopoeia. The Cuevans also had a pretty knack for surgery. Their treatment of a fracture, for instance, has hardly been improved upon: they set it, splinted it, bandaged it, and immobilized it in a cast of clay and plant gums. When operating they anesthetized the patient with narcotics, closed severed blood vessels with a gelatinous or resinous substance, disinfected the wound and sutured it—or, if suture was impossible, made shift with fresh rubber latex to hold the edges together. When the operation left a bad scar, they handled it in the most approved manner by supplementary surgery.

The best of medical care, even reinforced by magic, cannot always succeed, and when death is inevitable it should be accepted without dismay. The plebe dispensed with ceremonies, and a man met his end alone. Family and friends carried him—pallbearers of the still-quick—into the forest and left him in his hammock with a little food and water to begin the journey to the other world. If he recovered, he was welcomed back to the village with honor and rejoicing. Nobles, on the other hand, died in their homes and were accorded proper funerals and delightfully convivial wakes.

Customs differed from district to district. In the Bayano Valley, and in most of Cueva, deceased chieftains were cured like revered hams: decked in their richest ornaments, wrapped in the finest of cloths, they were suspended over a pair of dripping-trays surrounded by glowing embers and well dried out, after which they were wound in more cloths and hung in a special room with their smoked predecessors. The preserved tibás were ranged in chronological order, either in hammocks or swung from the roof, and a space was left for any

who had died in such fashion that his body was lost. The rites were sorrowful until the dried tibá had been aligned with his forebears, but once this was done, they turned into a rousing feast and dance—the King is dead; long live the King! A year later subjects and such neighboring chiefs as were friendly at the time gathered for a particularly gay commemorative festival, which may have celebrated the arrival of the departed in heaven.

(The Indians believed in heaven, which was like earth minus earth's defects, and in a shadowy afterworld inhabited by spirits who were either ineligible for paradise or were delayed in reaching it. Their untutored minds had not conceived the savagery of hell.)

Chronicles of the Darién colony describe in some detail burials in which the wives or concubines of a dead chief, and a number of his slaves, accompanied him to the other world. Such mass suttee was not, however, a Cuevan custom, and the fact that in Cueva it was said to exist only in Panamá and Pacora raises a doubt that these adjoining chiefdoms were perhaps a "foreign" enclave. In certain parts of Coiba and in the mountains southwest of Bea and Corobarí it was observed with varying rites, of which the least distressing was probably that whereby the richly adorned women and, at a suitable distance, the slaves drank themselves into complete insensibility, whereupon the assembled mourners paused in their feasting to give them respectful burial. It might be imagined that inasmuch as only preferred women and serfs died with their lord, there would have been a marked cooling of devotion when the end seemed near, and that foresighted concubines would have made themselves disagreeable well in advance. Actually, it was considered the height of good fortune to be thus assured of eternal felicity and social prominence, and the thirty or forty people who might elect, or be elected, to go with an important chieftain to an Indian Elysium did so in the best of spirits.

The funeral rites of the chief of Pocorosa were witnessed by Andagoya. The ceremonial curing took place in a house. Around the body sat ten or twelve nobles, draped in black cloth which covered even their faces; no one else was allowed to enter the room. Outside, the mourners stood crowded. At intervals the great drum was struck, and as the sound died, a tequina lifted his voice to chant a chapter of the dead tibá's life and glories, pausing for the antiphonal responses of

the mourners. Two hours after midnight the people gave a great howl. A deep silence followed, and then, with laughter and drinking, the festive part of the wake began, although the black-clad watchers still kept their guard. In Pocorosa it was customary to burn the chief's body at the year-end commemoration, together with some food, arms, models of canoes, and such other effects as he might need until he reached the land of immortals.

Feasts of any kind, from the banquets which the chief sometimes offered to his people as purely social occasions to full-scale tribal gatherings, were noisy, strenuous, alcoholic, and the Indians' principal recreation. Weddings—no more animated than funerals and hardly more festive—were splendid excuses for entertainment. Guests came from far and near, each with his finery packed in a basket and each with a gift. When everyone was ready, the father of the bride and the father of the groom began an energetic *pas-de-deux*, dancing until, sweating and exhausted, they could consider their part of the proceedings to have been carried out with proper zeal. The two young people, who had not seen each other during the eight days of premarital seclusion imposed on the bride, now advanced toward their perspiring parents who, kneeling, formally presented their children to each other. This ended the ceremony.

With much shouting and joking the young men seized their stone axes and rushed to cut a clearing for the new family's plantation, after which everyone went for a swim. The banquet and dance followed, during which all weapons were checked with a custodian as a precautionary measure. Unlike war dances, these were taken part in by both men and women, moving hand in hand a few steps forward, a few steps back, while singing responses to the couplets chanted by the master of ceremonies. An old woodcut illustrates such an occasion: faithful to the spirit, if possibly shaky as to factual detail, it depicts a scene strongly reminiscent of Kentish yokels in a May festival on the green, an illusion enhanced by the resemblance of the tribal drum to a keg of beer.

Divorce was fairly easy, and was usually obtained on grounds of childlessness, "for which each party blamed the other." The Cuevans also swapped wives, either because they were bored or because their inveterate love of barter got the better of them. In these deals the

trader who got the older wife was considered to have made the shrewder bargain; she was apt to be better trained, less jealous, and more constant.

Among the most solemn ceremonial feasts were those connected with a declaration of war. The great drum boomed a thunderous summons, the tribesmen assembled, and after a secret council (cabinet meeting) and a larger council of nobles and headmen (joint session of congress) the decision was taken and the feast began. To thudding drums, the whine of Panpipes and flutes, the deep bray of conch shells, and the clatter of maracas, the tequina chanted an account of the matter, reporting to the rank and file the action to be taken. Chicha flowed, torches flared against the darkness, while hour after hour a circle of men, arms locked across each other's shoulders, shuffled and stamped a battle dance. The chants turned to sagas of tribal glories and forecasts of coming triumphs, tired priests were relieved by assistants, dancers dropped out overcome with beer and fatigue and were replaced by fresher men, but not until the sky flushed over the forest and the sun-god appeared did the feast end. Later in the day the old men who had been delegated to stay sober and keep the minutes briefed the more active participants, whose memory of the decisions arrived at was understandably hazy.

Any Indian considered unnecessary labor silly, but it is obvious that life was not all feasts and jolly funerals. Girls were early taught to cook, to draw maho fiber, to grind meal, to spin thread and dye the skeins, to make wine and chicha. It was the women's business to mix *thyl* for tattooing, red *bixio* and dark blue *xagua* for body paint, and to decorate their male relations with becoming designs. On the march, women carried the loads, usually slung from either end of a shoulder pole, and women did the planting and harvesting. All in all, one wonders how those pleasure-loving girls found time or strength for anything but duty. The men provided game and fish for the pot; cleared, burned off, and turned the land for sowing; made canoes, tools and weapons; built the houses; fashioned utensils and ornaments; made camp and set up the hammocks which their wives had packed all day.

They did a little gold-working, but their choicest pieces were imported—some from Urabá, more from Dabaibe; the bracelets and

leg bands of gold, pearls, and colored stones came from the Pacific coast. The provenance of the magnificently executed gold-plated objects which so intrigued the colonists is not stated, and the secret of their manufacture without mercury has only recently been discovered.⁶

The Spaniards, who loathed manual work themselves, complained bitterly of the Indians' light-minded preference for games and amusement over slave labor under a Spanish master, but they say little as to what the games were. One consisted of a sham battle with cane staves which was real enough to leave wounded and even dead on the field and which was the pedestrian counterpart of the favorite Castilian sport called *cañas*. No doubt Cuevans played that almost universal game with disks of clay, the principle of which is a kind of cross between horseshoe pitching and bowls. Target practice and shooting contests were both instructive and diverting, and a drive for deer or even a day's fishing (shared by the women and children) became agreeable picnics. In fact the gregarious Indians had the knack of turning work into pastime, thanks to a habit expressed by "Let's make . . ." instead of "I must make . . ."

There appears to have been little or no use of violent intoxicant drugs in Cueva, and one finds no mention of frenzies resulting from such things as *datura*, *toluachi*, or *peyotl*. They chewed coca, of course, to alleviate fatigue and hunger—toasted, with a little lime from powdered shells to bring out the alkaloid. They occasionally put themselves to sleep with aromatic fumes of *guaymaro* burnt on the family hearth, which gave off a smell that the Spaniards found worse than any insomnia, and very rarely they took narcotics to induce visions. And, of course, they used tobacco.

A quiet smoker in Cueva was such an odd proceeding, involving the maximum of trouble with the minimum of result, that one wonders how the Indians evolved it. Only one of the company actually handled the tobacco (called by them *cohiba*), which was rolled into a thick cheroot some three feet long and "as thick as a man's wrist." The host lighted one end of this cigar-to-end-all-cigars, damped the next section to prevent it from consuming too quickly, and then inserted the burning end into his mouth. At the same time he puffed the smoke into the faces of his expectant friends, who cupped their hands about their mouths to receive it. This remarkable trick must have required long

and painful practice, but it was common to many tribes. For that matter, in certain out-of-the-way parts of Colombia cheroots are still smoked lighted end inwards, although the effete moderns do not attempt to manage one as big as a baseball bat, blowing outward the while.

The Cuevans had no writing of any kind. The pieces of paper (or, lacking paper, *caney* leaves) with signs on them which the white men sent to one another were clearly magic; it was the paper itself that talked—how else could a man in Darién know what had happened in Careta, though he had never moved from his own house? Moreover, it was probable that the enchanted papers could make it very uncomfortable for anyone who treated them ill or delayed them on the way; couriers traveled fast and carried them tenderly, just in case. No doubt the missives could talk also to Indians if they chose, but the chief who tried to start a conversation with one reported that it was arrogant and uncommunicative.

Nothing is told of a calendar or method of counting, although it is possible that a system noted near the Pacific coast many years later, while not in the Cuevan tongue, had its counterpart in Cueva. Cumbersome but logical, it proceeded by tens; eleven was "ten one," twelve was "ten two," and so on. By the time the count reached, say, thirty-six, one had to say "*tula boguah anivego indricah*," accompanying the words with three sharp hand-claps, one for each ten, and a finger tally for each unit above that. It is not surprising to learn that the average Indian could handle only modest numbers, and that a maximum of one hundred was attained only by gifted mathematicians. Any large quantity was expressed by taking a lock of hair and shaking it; the bigger the lock, the greater the number.

With true Hamitic perversity the Indians did not embrace the doctrines of Christianity with the convinced fervor they should have displayed. Could it have been because the methods and manners of the Spaniards were unpersuasive? Oviedo, who was not above slave-driving, execution, and grave-robbing himself, remarks reprovingly that he never saw a perfect Christian among the Indians, "though they had acquaintance and knowledge of Christians."

Indeed, a great many of the habits of the white God's followers shocked the natives intensely. War, slavery, torture, loot, amputation

as punishment—these Spanish customs were like their own, and in themselves quite admissible. But the Spaniards were without moderation. They took too much; they ill-treated their slaves; they waged war on people who had never offended them, and, fewer in numbers than a Cuevan subtribe, laid claim to limitless territory that they had never seen and could not use; they were insatiable in victory and in vengeance. They were crude as well as greedy, destroying in their furnaces the golden objects wrought patiently to beauty; they quarreled among themselves. Finally—and this was almost their most damning trait—they spoke falsely and broke their promises. (Casas tells with patent glee of one Indian who declared: “Yes, I am already something of a Christian because I can lie a little; soon I will know how to lie a lot and be very much a Christian.”)

The conquistadores claimed that the Indians could die at will, merely by making up their minds to it, and that they frequently did so out of sheer spite just to inconvenience their Spanish masters. The thing is quite possible; it cannot have required much will power to leave the kind of life endured by most of the enslaved. Left to themselves, however, they were long-lived. One may discount the later statement that “the people here live to 150 and 160 years of age”—the author, a Scot who obviously lacked the caution of his race, also remarked that the Indians were “five or six feet high”—but it seems to be true that a woman was found near San Blas who had six generations of living descendants. Asked the eternal question: To what did she attribute her great age? she replied succinctly: To keeping away from liquor and Christians.

The crone was doubtless right, and the Christians might have profited by a similar policy with regard to the natives, for each had secret weapons which neither could control. Syphilis, which among the Indians seems to have been an affliction about on a level with sinus trouble, ravaged the unaccustomed Europeans: “. . . out of a hundred men, only one escaped—if the other party did not have it,” Casas says. The incidence was not, of course, as high as all that, or even the semi-immunized Indians would have shown more of its effects. Also, it must be remembered that there were native prostitutes in the Indian villages called in Cueva *yracha*, a pluralized form of *yra*, woman (indicating not several women but one who was, so to speak,

a woman many times over), and no doubt the girls offered by hospitable chiefs to Spanish soldiers were often *yrachas*. The native remedy for the ill was made from *guayacán* (*lignum vitae*), and adopted by the Spaniards under the name of *palo santo* it soon became a stand-by in European pharmaceuticals. The rapidity with which the new disease spread in the Old World can be judged by the fact that one Juan Gonsalvo, who started shipping *palo santo* to Europe in 1508, made a fortune of three million gold florins from the trade.

In exchange for the pallid spirochete and other infirmities proper to the Indies, the Spaniards brought their own maladies, against which the Indians had no inherited resistance. What are known as children's diseases mowed them down in swathes, and smallpox all but wiped out whole populations. The conquerors destroyed the natives by what they euphemistically called "pacification" and by pitiless forced labor, but it is doubtful if any of their voluntary methods were as deadly as the sicknesses they transmitted.

These, then, were the Indians of Cueva: a handsome, cheerful people, skillful to make the country serve them, brave against familiar dangers, given to hospitality, kind and quick to laughter. ("A poor naked people contented with their fate.") Neither their simple virtues nor their unforgiving hostility once they had been goaded to hatred could save them from the white men's cruelty. They were doomed because they were not quite poor enough or savage enough, and because their lands lay across the path of conquest. Any survival was through absorption by the Cunas, who succeeded them—the Cunas who resembled them in so many ways, but who, luckier and more adaptable than they, learned to be dangerous while still on the fringe of the exploited region, and moved into Cueva when it no longer mattered to the conquistadores.

Perhaps the Cuevans did not matter either; their culture was a small thing to lose compared to the civilizations of Mexico and Peru and Yucatán. But they deserved to live. One wonders if the missionary friars told them that the true God marks every sparrow's fall, and what they thought of it.

XI

THE tide of prosperity and good luck on which Santa María del Antigua had ridden for eight months turned at the end of November 1511. There was a particularly heavy storm; the streams, swollen by three months of rain, overflowed their banks, and when the waters went down all that was left of the ripening fields—planted, of necessity, at the wrong season—was a soggy waste of mud and twisted corn-stalks.

The colonists were caught off base. They had not thought it necessary to hoard the provisions brought by Valdivia; the harvest would soon be ready and they had Colón's promise of ample supplies to come. Colón, however, had done nothing whatever to carry out his obligations, and by December the shadow of hunger lay once more over the settlement. Balboa determined to send Valdivia again to Hispaniola. This time the procurador would carry the King's quinto, and with it the news of the Other Ocean—together, enough to persuade the most tepid bureaucrats that Darién (and Vasco Núñez) were worth cultivating with more than phrases. Sure of his ground, Balboa asked for five hundred or a thousand men, veterans from Hispaniola trained to frontier action, and as much as possible in the way of ammunition, arms, and provisions. He also dispatched a transcript of the proceedings against Enciso, probably with the idea of spiking any attempt on the lawyer's part to return now that prospects were bright in the colony.

The royal fifth, being in this case a fourth, came to 15,000 pesos. It was "good gold," and 150 pounds of it could hardly have failed to arouse the kindest feeling in every official breast—had it ever arrived. But not one grain of it reached the royal treasury.

Valdivia set out from Darién on January 13, 1512. With him, besides the crew, went a Franciscan friar named Gerónimo de Aguilar and two unnamed Spanish women. Since Valdivia carried, in addition to the quinto, a heavy consignment of private gold from various vecinos, his little vessel was beyond doubt the richest ship that sailed the

Ocean Sea.¹ It was wrecked some hundreds of miles north of Urabá, on the reefs known as the Vipers. The survivors crowded into the lifeboat, and after thirteen dreadful days were deposited by the current on the coast of Yucatán, where they were promptly captured by the Indians. It was a year before Vasco Núñez learned that his envoy had never arrived in Hispaniola, and longer still before the authorities in Santo Domingo and Castile knew that a treasure ship had been sent from Santa María. When this information did reach the King and the Casa, it was given to them so overlaid with virulent accusations against Balboa that much of its good effect was nullified. The informants had jumped to the conclusion that some wreckage seen in Cuba was that of Valdivia's ship, and it was not until 1519 that the whole story was known.

In February of 1519, Hernán Cortés sailed from Cuba for Mexico. Two years before, Francisco de Córdoba had brought back from Yucatán a tale of Indians who hailed the Spaniards: "Castilán, Castilán," and although Grijalba, coasting from southeastern Yucatán all the way to Tampico the following year, found no trace of Christians, Cortés was instructed to search further. His first stop was at the island of Cozumel, near the top of the peninsula, where he learned that there were indeed "bearded men" living not far away. They could be reached from the coast "in a matter of two suns' journey," and they had been serving native masters for seven years.

Cortés wrote all about it to the King and Queen: how he sent some Indians to the mainland with a letter for the castaways, and three days later two bergantines, "on account of the coast being very dangerous, as it is," for larger vessels; how after waiting six days (at Punta de Catoche) the bergantines returned without news, and how he determined to go in person with his whole fleet, regardless of danger—a debatable decision—and was providentially prevented by bad weather when actually under way. "That contrary weather," Cortés wrote, "was held among us, and truly, to be a very great mystery and miracle of God"—for the next day a canoe under sail reached the island, and in it was Fray Gerónimo de Aguilar, onetime of Santa María del Antigua del Darién.

Fray Gerónimo did not look like a Franciscan, or for that matter like a Spaniard, and he had almost forgotten how to behave like one.

As he came ashore, his paddle over his shoulder, one sandal tucked into the band of his breechclout, he was not recognized as a European until he stammered words in his half-forgotten mother tongue: "God and Holy Mary and Seville!" The commander was notified, but when Cortés looked at him he saw only a native branded as a slave, and asked what had become of the Spaniard. "And the Spaniard, hearing him, squatted down as the Indians do and said, 'I am he.' "

Aguilar had been found by Cortés' native messengers in the house of Chief Taxmar of Xamanzana, not far from Punta de Catoche. He was a captive, but a favored one; according to Herrera, his position was approximately that of chief eunuch. This was the direct reward of virtue. The friar's continence, at first regarded with incredulous suspicion, had been subjected to tests which would have strained the well-known resistance of St. Anthony; it had emerged triumphant, and the chief, delighted to find the right man for an exacting job, had made him Keeper of the Household and Harem. Reluctant to lose a servant who might well be irreplaceable, Taxmar had at first objected to releasing Aguilar, but in the end the parting had been amicable, and Fray Gerónimo had proceeded to the neighboring state of Chetemal to give the glad news of deliverance to a fellow castaway, a sailor of Palos named Gonzalo Guerrero. More adaptable than the celibate friar, Guerrero was living in complete content with a Mayan wife and family: equally successful, he had been made war captain to Nachantán, Lord of Chetemal. He firmly refused to be rescued.

"Brother Aguilar," he said comfortably, "I am married; I have three children; I am considered a chief and a captain in time of war. Go you with God; I have my face tattooed and my ears pierced . . . what would the Spaniards say to see me thus? And you see my three little sons, how pretty they are! I beg of you, give me for them some of those green beads that you carry, and I will say that my brothers sent them to me from my own land."

Guerrero's wife ("a rich lady") was more outspoken. One gathers that if enaguas had strings, the sailor was tied to hers.

"Well, look at this slave who comes to summon my husband!" she cried in anxious fury. "Go away, you, and don't try any more of this talk!"

The fate of the other survivors of Valdivia's ship is told in strong

colors by several of the chroniclers. Seven or eight of those in the lifeboat had died before reaching land; three, Valdivia among them, had been offered as sacrifices to the Mayan gods and been eaten afterwards in a ritual feast. Aguilar and six others had escaped from the pen in which they were confined and had found refuge with other chiefs, thus saving themselves from a culinary end, but they had all, with the exception of Guerrero and the friar, succumbed thereafter to disease or exhaustion. The story is artistically satisfying; but it should be noted that Cortés, in his contemporary report, is silent about anthropophagal rites and says only that Aguilar's companions were so widely scattered throughout the interior that their rescue was not feasible.

Vasco Núñez never knew what happened to his old friend Valdivia. Two months before Aguilar told the story to Cortés, Balboa's headless body had been laid in an unmarked grave in Acla. But that was in 1519; in 1512, when Valdivia sailed from Santa María del Antigua, the hungry but hopeful colonists saw the future as desert wanderers see the promised land: luxuriant, kind, and peculiarly their own.

Meanwhile, there was no point in hanging about the settlement, "eating the air on promise of supply." If the lords of the Other Sea could not be faced without reinforcements, there were regions more at hand as yet unexplored: those lying south of Darién. The colonists had undoubtedly heard enough about them from the Indians in the settlement to know that an expedition there would not be comfortable, but since information provided by the natives was always colored by an urgent desire to persuade the white men to go somewhere else, it is probable that no one realized how arduous an undertaking it would prove to be. On the other hand, Balboa may have felt that anything was better than trying to keep all the settlers, idle and short-rationed, in harmony at home. He organized a force of a hundred and sixty men, appointed Rodrigo de Colmenares his second-in-command, and with a bergantín and a small flotilla of canoes set out about the middle of March.

The date of the expedition has been frequently misplaced, apparently because Oviedo says (in another context) that Balboa first saw the Atrato on St. John's day, June 24, 1510. Since this is impossible—

in June of 1510 Balboa had not yet left Hispaniola—it has been assumed that Oviedo meant to write “1512” and that the amended date marks not only Balboa’s first sight of the great river but also the start of the entrada. The first of these suppositions may very well be true; the last is an error. Padre Sánchez, who accompanied the expedition, declared in a sworn deposition that it lasted for seven months, and although he came back with the rear guard, he was in Santa María by early October.

Another misconception has led the exploring campaign to be labeled “the Dabaibe Expedition.”

In succeeding years an El Dorado-like legend grew up among Spaniards about the golden city of Dabaibe: a strong and glittering place of palaces and treasures east of the Atrato, where a tutelary mother-goddess was worshiped in a temple of fabulous splendor. Martyr, evidently fascinated by the subject, is a mine of fact, fancy, and general confusion about it, and the information regarding it which is scattered through his “Decades” is warranted to entertain and mislead. The germ of the seductive myth can be found in Balboa’s report to the King of January 1513, where, however, it is no more than a résumé of data obtained on the expedition concerning a particularly prosperous village at the foot of the Cordillera on the Río Sucio. It has been assumed that Dabaibe—the visionary city rather than the real village—was the lure which drew the colonists to explore southward. But as Balboa himself makes perfectly clear, the place meant nothing to them before they started. Indeed, it is only on this basis that the entrada makes any sense: Balboa did not go to Dabaibe; what is more, he did not try to do so.

So far as any record shows, the colonists until this time had seen no more of the Gulf of Urabá than had been revealed in crossing from San Sebastián to Darién. They knew, of course, that there was a Great River; they had confirmation of the existence of rich mines in the country to the south (the “mines of Urabá,” which, it developed, were a long way from the land of the Urabaes), but Hojeda’s abortive attempt to reach them had been the last in that direction. They now proposed to find out what the Gulf was like, what profit they could wrest from its bordering chiefdoms, and how—or whether—they could get to the gold country.

Not all Caribbean bays and gulfs are scenic havens painted in green and sapphire. The Gulf of Urabá has moments of beauty, but mostly it is a drab expanse, brazen in the sun or dreary in lashing rain. Two thirds of its shore is swamp blanketed with mangroves and vegetable debris. It affords poor shelter from the trade winds and is subject to miniature hurricanes off the land known as *chocosanas*; its entrance is made dangerous by incompletely charted shoals and submerged reefs; its surface is strewn with drift. The expedition eventually landed on the eastern side near the head of the Gulf, almost the only bit of relatively solid shore not dominated by the malevolent Urabaes.

From here Balboa passed to Ceracana, a Cuna province, whose chief, Abraibe, lived about twenty-five miles from the Gulf on the river now called León. Ceracana appears to have extended from the Atrato east to the base of the Sierra de Abibe and south as far as the Río Sucio. A soggy, miasmic region, for the most part quite uninhabitable, its main product was fish. It was not, however, as indigent as might be imagined. The Spaniards found the capital village deserted (thanks to a timely warning from the still unreconciled Cemaco), but in rummaging through the houses they found seven thousand pesos of guanines, which they appropriated together with some of the large canoes called *uru* and a quantity of baskets and fishing nets. These last were particularly well made, and there were so many of them that Balboa named the river the Río de las Redes—the River of Nets.

It is not known how long the expeditionaries spent on the River of Nets, or how far they went, or whether the entire force took part in the exploration. At some point Balboa divided his company, leaving a third of the men with Colmenares, but it is impossible to say with certainty when this was done, or what Colmenares' activities were during the time he was on his own. Martyr, whose newsletter account of the expedition was based on what Colmenares told him in 1513, was somewhat confused (which, considering his ignorance of Tierra Firme and his informant's penchant for doctoring reports, is not surprising), and subsequent versions have been largely and often carelessly based on Martyr. As a result, Colmenares is variously said to have been: (a) the true discoverer of the Río León, and (b) absent from this exploration because engaged in an independent trip up the Atrato. A study of the sources, however, seems to establish that Col-

menares took part in the trip up the León; that while Balboa interrupted his entrada to return briefly to Santa María, he led a company by land "toward the mountains of the eastern coast [of the Gulf]"; and that when the two were again united, it was in Urabaibe at the village of a chief called Turvi—in other words, at or about the present Turbo.

Balboa's purpose in returning to Darién was to deposit the loot taken in Ceracana and to check on what was happening in the settlement. The decision was obviously wise, but it turned out to be unfortunate. As the canoes put out into the Gulf they were caught in a sudden violent storm; "everyone thought to be drowned, but by divine dispensation, Providence did not will that more than those who went in the canoe that carried the 7000 pesos should perish, and thus neither the gold nor these men were seen again." (Casas always saw and applauded the hand of God in the disasters which befell the conquistadores.)

Finding that nothing of moment, either good or bad, had occurred in Darién, Balboa set out for the second part of his program. Picking up Colmenares and his detachment at Turvi, he proceeded to exploration of the Atrato. If this was when he christened the river in honor of St. John, it was the twenty-fourth of June when the expedition passed through the delta channels to see its four-mile-wide open reaches. The name San Juan did not endure—after Pedrarias came everything which recalled Balboa's achievements was blotted out if possible—and for a long time the Spaniards referred to it as the Great River of Darién, but the best name for it was one of several used by the Indians: (T)Ata-dó, the Grandfather Water.

The Atrato is a slow-moving, majestic river, fourth largest in volume of South America, and is described (by the U. S. Hydrographic Office) as "resembling the lower Mississippi in its grandeur of proportion, its long reaches, its width . . . and its great depth." Eminently navigable, its silted mouths have been allowed to remain so for the reason that its immediate environs offer so little to navigate to or from. The Atrato Valley is not only hot, rank, and walled off from the interior by the tremendous Cordillera Occidental of the Andes, it is also one of the wettest spots on earth. It is wet because the rainfall averages about four hundred inches a year, and because the whole lower basin, where the fall in elevation is only one in twelve

thousand, is a waterlogged maze of streams, bayous, and overgrown morasses. At best, there are few places below the middle river where a landing is possible. At frequent worst, the Atrato overflows for miles on either side; the morasses become lagoons and the lagoons spreading lakes, and the observer has the haunting impression that the smallest earth movement would send the sea crowding inland to turn the Isthmus once more into a grotesque peninsula.

In spite of the difficulties, Balboa seems to have surveyed the country with care. There is a ring of first-hand knowledge painfully acquired in his letter to the King of the following January: "Going by land, it is necessary to march three leagues away from the river, and at times five or eight . . . one can manage to embark on the river occasionally by some estuaries that flow into it, which one cannot do at the main river because the area around it is under water, but the nearest place one can embark by the estuaries is half a league distant." And, lest Fernando should fail to realize what these aquatic marches implied, "Your Royal Highness must not suppose that the swamps of this land are so easy that we idled pleasantly through them, because it often happened that we went a league, and two, and three in bogs and water, naked, with our clothes bundled together on bucklers on top of our heads; and, having emerged from one swamp we entered into others, and in this manner marched two or three or ten days."

Some eighty miles from the Gulf the explorers came to a large river which enters the Atrato from the southeast. It is now called the Río Sucio (the Dirty River), but Balboa, who thought it very beautiful, named it in more genteel fashion, Río Negro. Camp was made on an island formed by the branching waterways around the river junction.² The island was well grown with *cañafístula* trees, and the compañeros, flinging themselves on the fruit with the brief enthusiasm of ignorance, learned the hard way that this variety of *cañafístula* is purgative. "Their guts dissolved away," Casas says succinctly, and they thought to die ignominiously on the spot.

Having recovered from this shattering experience, the purified expeditionaries were ready for an essay in conquest. Dabaibe could have been reached in two or three days up the Río Sucio, but they were not yet interested in Dabaibe.³ Instead, they advanced on a province which lay on the west bank of the Atrato, almost opposite

the island, whose ruler was called Abanumaque. The capital of Abanumaque was more a district than a village, consisting of five hundred or more houses in widely separated groups, but it offered little resistance. The Indians took flight, were pursued, turned at bay, and were quickly defeated. Someone lopped an arm off the chief, which angered Balboa, but the victim survived the amputation and contrived to make his escape. Less determined or less agile, the chief's son was captured, and was later taken to Santa María. The beaten Indians were either very poor or very clever, for the Spaniards could find no treasure in their village. As usual, however, there was plenty of information about gold elsewhere, and Balboa decided to go a little farther in search of it.

Leaving half his men in Abanumaque, he went on up the Atrato with the rest of the expeditionaries, guided by one of his recent captives. Some forty miles farther on, the guide turned them into a tributary river, and after a short distance pointed out the village of Abibaibe.

Most of the delta and river Indians had some cropland well back on high ground, but they built their villages in the swampy bottoms, preferably where there were close-growing palms which could be trimmed off to make firm foundation columns twenty or thirty feet tall. In Abibaibe, perhaps because of a scarcity of palms, the natives were tree dwellers. They had selected as the site of their capital a piece of semidry land at a fork of the river, where some giant trees lent themselves to the purpose, and built their houses solidly on beams laid across the branches. Many of the airy bohíos were large structures partitioned into several rooms, and all had attached storerooms where everything except wine could be kept in easy reach. (Wine, it appears, became turbid when the wind swayed the trees, and so was stored at ground level as in cellars.) When the river was high, the canoes were moored to the family tree with all the convenience of a basement garage. The houses were reached by rudimentary ladders formed of lianas, a pair for each dwelling to allow for two-way traffic, and the easy, simian grace with which a woman carrying a baby could swarm up to her front door was "something to see."

Abibaibe was won with axes. The inhabitants had retreated to their homes and drawn the ladders up after them, and a preliminary parley

with them had ended in a stalemate. Balboa peered upward, urging the chief to come down and be friends; the chief peered from his tree and begged the strangers to go away and leave him in peace. The Spaniards became threatening; the Indians, who felt entirely safe, were defiant. At last the order was given to cut down the trees. When the chief saw how the Spanish steel bit into the foundation of his refuge, "he changed his mind and descended, accompanied by his two sons, and they proceeded to argue about peace and gold."

Chief Abibaibe declared that he was not interested in gold himself, and thus never had bothered to collect any, but he was quite willing to tell where it could be obtained. From him Balboa got most of the astonishingly accurate information on the topography and mines of the Cordillera, and on the chiefdom of Dabaibe, which later blossomed lavishly into the legend of a golden city. Abibaibe added that he was afflicted by some "vary carib" neighbors who were extremely rich, and suggested hopefully that the Spaniards go and wipe out these undesirables; he, meanwhile, would make a trip to the mountains and bring back a tribute of gold. Neither of these projects was carried out. The chief departed and was thereafter seen no more, and Balboa, after going a little farther upriver and finding only empty houses, returned to Abanumaque.

As Balboa later remarked when pointing out his merits to the King, something always went wrong when he was not in personal command. The garrison in Abanumaque had got into trouble during his absence. Discipline had been lax; the men had been allowed to go off raiding on their own, and one party of ten led by a certain Raya had come upon Chief Abraibe and been soundly trounced. Raya and two others had been killed.⁴ This was bad, but the real gravity of the incident was its effect on the river Indians, who until then had been more or less paralyzed by the belief that the Spaniards were invincible. It now appeared that the strangers, for all their strength and arrogance, for all their weapons that shouted death, were vulnerable as other men. The word spread, and was to pass from generation to generation; thereafter the Atrato was a death trap for Christians.

The first sequel was a mass attack on the garrison, organized by Abraibe, Abanumaque, and Abibaibe. Abraibe, still smarting from the loss of seven thousand pesos of gold and elated at having polished off

Raya, was the moving spirit; his plan was to fall on the camp before Balboa could return from his foray upriver. Casas, who could never resist a chance to adorn a tale when he could thereby point a moral, and who was leaning heavily on Martyr's account, written in Latin, here gives way to fictional quotes:

"What misfortune is this, brothers, that has come upon us and our houses?" Abraibe declaims. "What have we done to these people who call themselves Christians—which we do not admit—that they should thus alarm and afflict us, who live in peace and tranquillity without offending them or anyone else? Until when must we endure the cruelty of these men who so perniciously ill-treat and persecute us? Would it not be less dolorous to die once than to suffer what you, Abibaibe, and you, Abanumaque, and what Cemaco and Careta and Ponca and all the other kings and lords of this our land have suffered from these cruel people, and have wept over with such grief?"

Casas gives a good deal more of this silver rhetoric, all packed with social significance. Abraibe certainly did not deliver it—not, at least, in the language of a papal prothonotary or a crusading Castilian bishop—but whatever he did say was effective. The outcome was that five or six hundred painted warriors, naked and yelling, rushed the Spanish camp in the dawn. The garrison, however, had been jolted into watchfulness, and by happy coincidence had been reinforced the day before with a troop of thirty men sent ahead by Balboa. The Indians were routed so completely that Balboa's irritation on learning of the Raya incident was tempered by the belief that native resistance had been broken. He wanted to leave a permanent post in Abanumaque as a base for future operations, and if he could not have friendly Indians about it, the next best thing was to have defeated ones.

The future operations were to be based on data gathered from Abibaibe and confirmed by other Indians whom Balboa had induced to talk by various methods, "some by torture, others for love, and others by giving them things of Castile." The information thus extracted was almost as enticing as that on the Other Sea.

Dabaibe, it was learned, was the chief of a large and populous country in the foothills of the Cordillera, whose capital was two days' journey by canoe up the Río Sucio. He was almost incredibly rich, not because he had mines of his own, but because he had established a

near monopoly on manufactured gold. He drove a thriving two-way trade; bartering skillfully fashioned guanines for the textiles, salt, fish, and other products of the coast, and exchanging a part of this merchandise, plus tasty young lads for eating, good-looking girls (not for eating), and wrought gold, for raw metals from the mines of the Cordillera. His smelter and his hundred craftsmen were never idle, and hundreds of pounds of dust and nuggets were laid up in his strong-house. Dabaibe's sources of supply, Balboa told the King, were in a range of mountains, "apparently the loftiest in the world," which began about twenty leagues inland from Caribana and ran southward, no one knew how far. The slopes above Dabaibe were heavily forested, but those beyond the cloud-hung crests were open, even bare, and it was there, high up towards the summit where "the sun strikes them in rising," that the mines were located. "According to the information I have," Balboa wrote, "these mines are the richest in the world." He added that they were owned and exploited by "a very carib and evil people who eat as many men as they can get." This was fact-finding at its best; the wealth of Dabaibe may have been overestimated (no one was ever able to verify it), but the mountains, the mines, and the cannibals were all as described.

Bartolomé Hurtado was appointed commandant of the camp in Abanumaque, and thirty iron-souled *compañeros* agreed to stay with him—plus Father Sánchez, who stayed, but without any appreciable conviction. Thirty men were not many for the job in hand, but even this meager force was soon sharply cut. A few weeks after Balboa had left, twenty-one of them, "who were sick or something," got permission to go back to Darién. Hurtado, with nine durable and indomitable companions, remained to keep the standard of Castile flying over a savage wilderness inhabited by ten or fifteen thousand hostile natives.

The twenty-one sick-or-something *compañeros*, with twenty-five captive Indians, crowded into one big canoe and bowled happily downstream—but not for long. Their enemies were waiting; paddling out from hiding in the half-submerged tangle of vegetation that edged the river, they attacked the canoe from all sides. The Indians were usually hopelessly outclassed on land, but on the water the odds were reversed: the Spaniards, wedged in their unstable craft, could not fight, and when pitched into the river most of them could not swim.

Only two escaped, clinging to some driftwood and camouflaging themselves with branches; miraculously, they managed to struggle back to Abanumaque with news of the disaster.

Hurtado was not easily shaken, but even he could see that it was a good time to leave the Atrato. The departure was spurred when inquiry (of a somewhat forceful nature) disclosed that the river chiefs were consolidating their alliance with the idea of killing every white man in Tierra Firme. Twelve battered soldiers and an unhappy priest, they girded themselves to make a run for the settlement. The Indians let them alone, by accident rather than design, and a few days later they reached Santa María del Antigua. The first expedition to the Big River was over.

The entrada had closed in deficit, with little to show for seven difficult months and thirty or more lives spent in its accomplishment. Balboa had, it is true, achieved the goal of most explorers: ample information about a potentially valuable country. But it was hard to say how, or when, he would be able to profit by his knowledge. For in the last months of 1512 Darién was in worse case than at any time since the settlement had been founded.

XII

SANTA MARÍA DEL ANTIGUA skirted the cold edge of annihilation in October of 1512, and brushed by unscathed.

The allied chiefs who had sworn to destroy the colony—Cemaco, Abraibe, Abanumaque, and Abibaibe—had planned their campaign with care. According to one source, they had five thousand warriors and a hundred large canoes, with which they proposed to launch a concerted attack on the settlement by land and sea. The role of each war captain was assigned, a supply base was established at a place called Tichirí, and even the division of the prospective spoils was precisely laid down. Had they struck at once, they could hardly have missed success. They delayed in the belief that no odds were sure so long as Balboa was in command of the colony—an eloquent tribute—

and on Cemaco's advice determined to eliminate the white tibá before moving on Santa María. To this end Cemaco sent forty of his subjects to the settlement, disguised as voluntary laborers, instructing them to lure Balboa to the fields to inspect the crops, and there assassinate him. The rest, it was felt, would be easy.

The scheme worked up to a point; no one questioned the fifth column's bona fides, and Vasco Núñez was induced to go out alone to look at the corn. But when the Indians saw him riding toward them they were afraid. Forty picked men, keyed to action and answerable to an absolute and angry overlord, convinced that the death of one individual would insure their freedom, they yet did not dare to raise a hand against him. Balboa rode back untouched, and the chiefs were forced to realize that with all their cautious foresight, they had underestimated the intangible power of prestige.

In the end the great rebellion failed before it began—partly from overorganization in the leisurely native fashion, but mostly because of Balboa's personal charm. In short, because of a girl.

The girl was a slim brown *espave*, a willing captive in Vasco Núñez' house, young, pretty, and very much in love. Balboa called her Fulvia, and "had so many attentions and so much esteem for her that it was as if she had been his legitimate wife." Fulvia had a brother who adored her, and this brother was one of Cemaco's vassals. He was in the habit of stealing into the settlement to visit her, profiting by the fact that to the Spaniards one Indian looked very like another and that a noble without his regalia could pass very well for a naboria. When the assault on Santa María was imminent, he managed to come and warn Fulvia.

"Dearly beloved sister," he began (in Casas' words), "listen well to what I am about to tell you, and see that you keep it secret, for on it hang the lives and liberty of us all . . ." An account of the plot followed.

Cemaco's jura must have been very young, or he would have known his folly. Fulvia was faithful to Balboa, and since the obverse side of loyalty is betrayal, she promptly told him everything she had learned. Then, instructed by her lord, she sent for her brother again, saying that she wanted to run away and hide with her own people. The young man came, was duly captured, and under pressure revealed everything,

including the responsibility of Cemaco for the attack on the compañeros returning from Abanumaque and for the attempted assassination of Balboa. Balboa at once marched with seventy men on Cemaco's village, some ten miles from the settlement, where he seized the chief's locum tenens and a number of other Indians, and then proceeded to Tichirí, where Colmenares, guided by Fulvia's unhappy brother, had gone with sixty men in four big canoes. The headman of Tichirí was in charge of the allies' supply dump, but in the belief that the rising was unsuspected he had been given no extra troops to defend it. Balboa easily took possession of the place, while Colmenares saw to the execution of the headman and four "officers." Finding their plot discovered and their supplies gone, the chiefs lost heart; the rebellion melted to the sullen peace of impotence, and the Spaniards returned to enlarge and strengthen the fort in Santa María against future danger.¹

The Indians had not yet been gathered in battle array, and Balboa had moved fast on learning of their project; nevertheless the almost unopposed capture of Cemaco's lieutenants and of Tichirí, which could only have been accomplished by coming on them unobserved, is an illustration of a frequently renewed mystery:

How was it that the Spaniards contrived to surprise the natives with such apparent ease? Granted that some baquianos had become versed in jungle craft, how could eighty or a hundred compañeros, carrying awkward weapons, encumbered by armor, accompanied by porters, dogs, and at times several horses, march by night over rough and unfamiliar terrain to catch the Indians napping in the dawn? At times they repeated the trick with half a dozen villages, all within a radius of twenty-five miles, finding each one wrapped in unguarded slumber. It is true that the Indians' dogs—or, at any rate, the only dogs of which we are told—were barkless. Small ("like little wolves"), shy, and affectionate, they were kept solely as pets; they could give no alarm and when attacked by the Spanish war mastiffs they died in silence. Yet the fact that their dogs were mute does not explain the persistent unpreparedness of a people who must have known that they had lost the safety of isolation. Where was that ever-watchful, all-seeing-yet-unseen intelligence service of the aborigine, in which we have been taught to believe so implicitly? What about the hidden

scouts, the drums that talk across the hills, the smoke signals, and the runners grim with warning? What about the telepathy dear to countless travel tales? All these primitive precautions seem to have been lacking, and for years, up and down the Isthmus, the white men continued to take the somnolent natives unaware.

The concrete threat of an Indian war did no more than highlight an already perilous situation. Evidently Colón had no intention of honoring the King's orders or his own pledged word; the absence of any reaction to the gold and information sent with Valdivia suggested that they had not reached Hispaniola. To have survived two long years of almost utter neglect was a miracle that could not continue indefinitely; somehow the outside world must be aroused to save the colony. Another delegation would have to be sent to Santo Domingo and Castile.

There were no seaworthy ships left in Darién, but the settlers managed to put together a solid clumsy vessel from the better parts of the two last bergantines, rigged with rope of maho fiber and equipped with a stone anchor. In this makeshift craft an embassy, driven by the daring that lies along the edge of desperation, would attempt to reach Hispaniola. If successful, it would proceed to report directly to the King.

This decided, the question of who should represent the colony at Court became acute. Balboa wanted to go. He felt sure that if he could talk to the great ones who controlled the Indies he could awaken them to enthusiasm. No one knew as much as he about "the secrets of the land," for the sufficient reason that he had published as little as possible of what he learned; no one, certainly, could convey as convincingly the singular merits of that deserving caballero, Vasco Núñez de Balboa. The colonists, however, vetoed the suggestion. Some of them were jealous; a few were already actively plotting to use the eventual emissaries as agents in Balboa's undoing and their own subsequent rise to power. But the majority were honestly afraid to see him leave. Even the recalcitrant compañeros had, as it were in spite of themselves, a blind reliance on his ability to keep them, if not safe, at least alive. Whoever went to Castile, it must not be Vasco Núñez.

For some time Santa María rocked with the devious joys of an election campaign. The candidacy of Nicuesa's ex-alcalde, Alonso

Núñez, was seriously considered, but Núñez had a wife in Madrid, and it was felt that he might forget the colony in the renewed pleasures of home. Finally it was voted to send Juan de Quicedo, the veedor. He had the King's ear, he was unfit for active service, he was used to the ways of bureaucracy, and he was a baquiano in the discovery and trade of the Indies. Furthermore, his wife Doña Inés, that robust conquistadora, would stay in the settlement as a guarantee of his return. Meanwhile his office would be filled by Andrés de Valdarrábano, the royal escribano.

One old man, voyaging in a jerry-built bergantín, was a bad risk: there must be a second, more vigorous procurador. After more argument and wire-pulling, Rodrigo de Colmenares secured the commission. He had a certain standing as Nicuesa's ex-lieutenant, and, as he pointed out, deserved consideration from the Crown for his thirteen years' service "by land and sea" during the wars in Italy. His interests were bound up in the colony, where by Balboa's favor he was rich in property and naborias. Balboa had every confidence in him—but so, unfortunately, had Balboa's enemies, and with far better reason. These last, an ambitious clique holding the potential menace of most aggressive minorities, had not yet come into the open, but they appear to have reached an understanding with Colmenares before he sailed.

The more obvious turns of history always prick one to wonder what would have happened *if*. . . . What would have happened if Vasco Núñez had been able to go to Court? Perhaps the whole inept and bloody tragedy of the early exploitation of the Isthmus would have been avoided; perhaps, confirmed in his command, Balboa would have discovered middle America and Peru, and grown old in honor as Viceroy and Marquis of the Farther Indies. On the other hand, of course, he might have failed in his mission and retired to provincial obscurity; he might never have discovered the Pacific. But history knows neither hypotheses nor alternatives; the facts are that Balboa stayed in Darién and that Quicedo and Colmenares went to Castile—Colmenares, at least, with the concealed and burning determination to supplant his chief as far as possible by whatever means he could find.

The vecinos took up a collection to pay the procuradores' expenses and a suitable salary, and at considerably greater sacrifice contributed thirteen bushels of corn meal by way of provisions for the voyage.

Three hundred gallons of drinking water were stowed in the bergantín, which was then taken to the mouth of the estuary. Balboa gave the envoys his reports, the petitions from the colonists as a body, five hundred pesos of raw gold from the mines for the King, and his blessing, and watched them embark without other apprehension than for their safety. On October twenty-eighth, with a crew of eleven and three miserable Indians, Quicedo and Colmenares set their patched sails and stood away for Hispaniola. According to Colmenares, they left only a hundred and sixty Spaniards in Darién.

All things considered, the voyage went remarkably well. After the usual stopover in Macaca, where Chief Comendador's hospitality was still holding out despite the frequent strains to which it was subjected, the procuradores made port in Santo Domingo fourteen weeks after leaving Santa María. Not long after, they were able to get passage with a home-bound armada which reached Spain in early May of 1513.

Colmenares and Quicedo employed their time and talents to remarkable effect during the weeks they were in Hispaniola. They convinced Pasamonte that Balboa was an unscrupulous bully who should be removed from his post with all dispatch—or, at any rate, they convinced him that Balboa should be so presented to the King. The Treasurer duly wrote to Fernando on these lines, with such apparent outrage that His Highness was seriously impressed. Diego Colón opposed this offensive against the man he had designated as his lieutenant in Tierra Firme, but Colón was discredited by his own behavior and by Pasamonte's insistence that he was trying to inch his way into direct control of the mainland—which was true enough.

The dispatches from Darién and from Santo Domingo, together with comments and suggestions from the officials of the Casa, were forwarded to the King from Seville on May nineteenth. They produced instant results. Fernando was ripe for action on Tierra Firme, and while he may have been slightly bewildered by the sudden *volte-face* of opinion about Balboa, he could not fail to be disturbed. Before the procuradores arrived at Court, in the middle of June, he had taken measures to meet the situation. In fact he had taken more measures than they liked, and Colmenares, for one, found his plans for power reduced to the soured dreams of impotent ambition.

Back in Darién, the days that followed the procuradores' departure

were tense and troubled. Hungry men are always difficult, and the vecinos of Santa María had been hungry for a long time. Raw-nerved and miserable, many of the colonists were half persuaded by the rebel group which was conspiring to overthrow Balboa.

The number of active malcontents was not large—perhaps ten or fifteen all told—but a little positive discontent can leaven a large amount of passive endurance, and as always, there were many fence-sitters poised to help the winners in a showdown. The ringleaders of the conspiracy were the alcaldes and regidores of the settlement, whose taste of authority had whetted their appetite: the bachiller Corral, a certain Alonso Pérez de la Rúa, Luis de Mercado, and Gonzalo de Badajoz, plus an unnamed escribano who had been tempted “because he was poor and young.” Needless to say, the intrigue was decked with the trappings of legal forms. Corral, Pérez, and the rest thought up lurid accusations against Balboa, and the callow notary set them down over his seal as the findings of a “secret investigation.”

Diego del Corral, who had come to Darién with Colmenares, who had shared his hot-and-cold attitude toward Nicuesa, and like him had remained to enjoy office in the settlement when the Governor had been ejected, was the brains of the faction. Wellborn, trained to the law, and at this time about thirty years old, he was not physically enterprising; the nearest approach to an entrada he ever made seems to have been an inspection tour just south of Darién in 1522, when he succeeded in provoking a previously peaceful tribe to rebellion. None of his record is pretty, and some of it is singularly ugly, as when he connived with a hostile native chief against his own countrymen. His most notable trait was a tireless talent for slander.

It may have been indirectly through this unsavory hidalgo that Vasco Núñez learned of the plot against him. Corral had forgotten “a poor, honest, and virtuous” wife in Spain for a fascinating young espave from Bea, the delta chiefdom five or six leagues from Santa María. He had the girl baptized, named her Elvira, and lived under her slim brown thumb for twelve years. No doubt those two classically christened favorites, Fulvia and Elvira, often met to gossip and compare notes, and as we have seen, Fulvia kept Balboa well informed.

Vasco Núñez, “all his faults observed, set in a notebook, learn’d and conn’d by rote,” was the prime objective, but the rebels’ first

overt move was an attempt to seize Bartolomé Hurtado, the alguacil. Hurtado was Balboa's friend as well as chief constable of the colony, and it was good tactics to get him out of the way; besides, Pérez de la Rúa had conceived for him a special antipathy. Balboa, warned of the scheme, moved first and clapped Pérez in jail, whereupon the other conspirators rushed to arms and sallied forth to free their companion. The colony jail was at that time a stout wooden cage set up in the middle of the plaza. When the rebels reached the square, they found the way barred by Balboa and a company of loyal followers, and as the two angry groups confronted each other the fate of the settlement hung for a few moments in precarious balance. Fortunately (and surprisingly) the calmer heads among the vecinos managed to make themselves heard. These sensible fellows pointed out the folly of a battle which could have no victory, since the few who survived would inevitably fall victim to the Indians. Brought up short by the logic of this argument, the contenders agreed to an understanding.

With some formality a peace was negotiated: Balboa promised to release Pérez, and the rebels promised to cause no more trouble. Balboa kept his word; his adversaries drew up plans for a fresh revolt before twenty-four hours were out. They began by capturing Hurtado, but were induced to let him go after half a day. This did not mean that they had thought better of their project; they had merely decided to concentrate on the main part of it. Thus simplified, it had two aims: to depose and imprison Balboa, charging him with misconduct and crooked division of the spoils, and to take over the spoils themselves—ten thousand pesos of gold—and apportion them according to their own fancy.

Here Balboa had an uncharacteristic moment of inspired duplicity. With full intelligence of the reborn plot, he pretended ignorance, and let it be known that he was going that night on a hunting trip. In the evening he set out for the *monte* in seemingly guileless confidence; with the contents of the treasury in mind, he was gambling that the conspirators would grab the rope so conveniently offered and hang themselves forthwith. This they obligingly proceeded to do; having rifled the strongbox, their division of the treasure caused such an uproar that a deputation was sent scurrying to find Vasco Núñez. Escorted to the settlement to be met by an armed and acclaiming

crowd, he had no need to urge resistance to the insurgents; his problem was to prevent too drastic reprisals against them.

The ringleaders were put in jail, and Balboa appointed two prominent colonists to investigate the case and draw a bill of indictment to be sent to Spain. He would have done better to hold onto his ebbing anger, profit by public resentment, and as *alcalde mayor* conduct a quick trial to a foregone conclusion. He had no power to execute capital sentence, but he could, with general approval, have remanded the culprits to Colón and been well rid of them. Unfortunately, Balboa was temperamentally incapable of this kind of precaution; however bitter in the heat of a quarrel, he could never keep his resentment sharp and his guard up once the quarrel seemed over. Now he soon relented and released the prisoners in the custody of the Franciscan friars, thus preserving enemies in the colony who were to do him infinite harm later on.

Even Balboa, however, recognized the venomous capacities of the *bachiller Corral*. He attributed them largely to Corral's profession: troublemaking, he felt, was an occupational defect of lawyers in general. "One grace I would implore Your Highness," he wrote soon after the abortive revolt, "and that is, that no doctor of laws or of anything else except medicine should come to these parts of *Tierra Firme*, on pain of heavy penalty . . . because no *bachiller* comes here who is not a devil, and they lead the lives of devils; and not only are they evil, but what is more they devise and employ methods which result in a thousand lawsuits and iniquities."

This was plain talk, if no more so than that which reached the King about the lawyers who infested *Hispaniola*. Nevertheless, had Balboa known as much when he composed it as he did two years later, he might have searched for stronger terms.

Relief came at the end of December, by which time, as Balboa remarked, the colonists "were in such straits that had it delayed much longer it would have been superfluous, because there would have been nothing left to relieve." It was brought by two vessels from *Hispaniola*, which appear to have been the *bergantín* and *caravel* which Colón had assured the King (in October of 1512) he was preparing to dispatch to *Tierra Firme*. If so, Colón's merit was limited to issuance of a

license, at least with regard to the bergantín. The little vessel was on a private trading venture at the cost of her commander, a baquiano of Hispaniola named Sebastián de Ocampo.

Hidalgo, pilot, and man of substance, Ocampo had gone to the Indies with Columbus in 1494, and had lived there ever since, not entirely by choice. In 1501 a Spanish court had condemned him to death *in absentia* "because of a certain question . . . with Juan de Velásquez," and the sovereigns, "moved by certain just reasons" (Ocampo had been a criado of the Queen), had commuted the sentence to perpetual banishment to the New World realms. He must have been pardoned later. He was apparently under no cloud in 1508 when Governor Ovando commissioned him to circumnavigate Cuba and verify if it were an island;² he was associated with Pasamonte in business, and when he came to Darién he planned a subsequent voyage to Castile. He knew everyone of importance in Hispaniola, and with many of them (including Nicuesa) had participated in commercial enterprises. He may have been friendly with Balboa in the island, or he may only have been predisposed in his favor because he was a fellow Galician—a good enough argument for the regionally minded Spaniards. In any case, he became Balboa's confidant and ally during his stay in Santa María.

Casas, confusing these two ships with others which went to Darién some months later, says that they had been sent for the account of the authorities in Santo Domingo with a hundred fifty new settlers. He also says that they delivered to Balboa the brevet of captain general of the colony, which, "it was said," had been issued by Pasamonte by virtue of a general authorization from Fernando to appoint officials in Tierra Firme. "The joy and pleasure which Vasco Núñez received at seeing himself thus exalted was beyond measure," Casas adds, ". . . because until then he had maintained his usurped authority over the Spaniards by force and cunning."

This is all wrong. Balboa had been governing by appointment from Colón ever since September of 1511, and while his emotions on receiving the King's commission as captain general (something Pasamonte was never empowered to bestow) were doubtless all the chronicler describes, he did not experience them at this time. This is clear from the text of his monumental letter to Fernando dated Janu-

ary 20, 1513, and sent off with Ocampo. He acknowledges Fernando's cédula about taking in the men from Nombre de Dios, which, it is true, addresses him as "Our Captain," but it is evident that he saw no more in the title than acquiescence in Colón's stopgap appointment, or he would not have devoted so much—far too much—of his letter to efforts to get royal approval as commander in Darién. He is careful, too, not to call himself more than "Alcalde Mayor." He mentions official aid only to complain of its absence, and new recruits only to emphasize the need for them. What he does say is that the settlement, "as badly sustained from Hispaniola as if we had not been Christians," has survived only by divine mercy and his own unrelenting ability, and that of the pitifully few settlers left in the colony not more than a hundred are "fit for war."⁸

Balboa must have had by now a very fair idea of Colmenares' and Quicedo's relations with the insurgent vecinos, and hence of what the procuradores would say about his rule in Darién. He knew that his enemies intended to forward the record of their "secret inquiry" to Castile. His own counterinformation would, of course, arrive at the same time, but it was doubtful if it would weigh enough against information plus two flesh-and-blood persuaders. What he needed was a good personal representative to offset Colmenares and Quicedo—and, another proof of the special grace he believed God vouchsafed him, there was one to his hand: Sebastián de Ocampo.

It is probable that Balboa's proposal to Ocampo to serve as his procurador to the King was accompanied by a promise of substantial reward contingent on his success. But Ocampo was not a man to accept such a mission for purely mercenary reasons. The fact that he did accept (to say nothing of his subsequent behavior) is proof that he was convinced of Balboa's worth. Thus when he left Santa María, he carried 370 pesos of mine gold for the King, some samples of native products, a branded slave who was to explain native methods of washing metal, and full power to negotiate with Fernando on Balboa's behalf. It was not his fault that the careful plan went wrong, or that the evidence and inducements offered by Balboa reached the King too late to be of any appreciable use.

XIII

BALBOA was not a polished writer, but he was a remarkably copious one. The dispatches addressed to the King in January included at least five from his hand, of which only one—the general letter dated January twentieth—has survived. The others were: “another letter giving an account of all that has happened here,” a memorandum devoted to Nicuesa’s faults and errors, “an inquiry and report of my life and my very great and loyal services which I have rendered Your Highness in these regions of the Indies,” and “an account of what transpired in consequence of [the insurgent colonists’] iniquitous inventions.”

Nothing can compensate for the loss of the account of everything that had happened in Darién, or of the memorial of Balboa’s life and services—or for that matter, for that of all save one of his other reports and letters to the King and the royal officials. Some twenty-five of them are known by reference or in secretarial summaries, but the originals and textual copies early vanished from the files, together with his correspondence with Hispaniola and any documents he drew for use in Darién. Such wholesale disappearance suggests that the two which have been preserved escaped an otherwise efficient purge by an oversight for which one must be grateful. The letter of January 1513 is not Balboa’s prize report (one would gladly exchange it for that describing the expedition to the Pacific, or for the all-inclusive one he compiled in 1514 for his successor’s guidance), but it covers a good deal of ground. Moreover, it is a singularly revealing bit of writing. Balboa emerges from its pages in a portrait of unposed candor: brave, resourceful, ambitious, unsubtle; a magnificent frontier leader with considerable intelligence, unusual common sense, and the diplomatic finesse of a single-minded elephant.

The letter is about fifty per cent impersonal information, twenty-five per cent projects and requisitions, and twenty-five per cent campaign for a Crown appointment as captain-commander in Darién. These proportions are not immediately apparent, because Balboa,

who clearly disdained such things as rough drafts and revision, set down what he wanted to say as it occurred to him, and arguments in favor of a royal brevet occurred to him with great frequency. Declarations of his merits and cross-referenced recitals of his predecessors' defects are inserted wherever there is an opening for them, and often where there is none, and since both are laid on with a trowel the effect is a little obsessive. It must be admitted that when squarely on this tack Balboa does not appear at his best, at least to modern eyes. On the other hand, it is possible that his contemporaries, accustomed to the intemperate and prolix style of the times, did not find him specially heavy-handed. No one expected humility from a candidate for office—certainly not in the Indies, where the meek inherited nothing and the modest flower was inevitably stepped on.

Hojeda and Nicuesa, Balboa said, had been irresponsible, cruel, and incompetent. Nicuesa, especially, had shirked leadership of dangerous or merely arduous entradas, shuffling off his duties onto subordinates, with the results that might have been expected. Neither Governor had had any thought for the safety of the people under his command, or any compassion for their suffering; on the contrary, both had "used them like slaves," and their tyranny had been aggravated by occasional crass favoritism. Furthermore, they had refused to portion out so much as a *real's* worth of the loot among the *compañeros* entitled to it, so that the men "were so dejected that they did not care about taking gold even if they saw it lying next to them." Such behavior in a captain would be detrimental anywhere; in a country like Tierra Firme it was fatal. Architects of their own disasters, Nicuesa and Hojeda had achieved nothing, and between them they had lost eight hundred men, most of whom had not even received Christian burial.

(Much, if not all of this was true enough, but Balboa might have left out the passage in which he says that "their presumption and arrogance were such that they fancied they were sovereigns of the land and should rule . . . from their couches, and so they did; and as soon as they got here they thought they need do nothing but give themselves up to dissipation." Even in Castile, the picture of the Governors lolling in wanton ease in San Sebastián and Veragua must have raised a smile.)

In contrast to all this he, Vasco Núñez, had been ever diligent in good works. "Night and day I think of nothing save how I may help and protect . . . these few people whom God has spared us." "I do not stay in bed while the men go out to raid . . . they have not gone in any direction that I did not go before them, even opening trail by my own hand." "I cared for the people whom Nicuesa abandoned as if I had been responsible for them and had myself brought them from Castile by authority from Your Very R.H." "I, my lord, have always seen to it that everything obtained up to now, after the part belonging to Your V.R.H. is set aside, be very well distributed . . . the gold to those who went to take it, each according to his person, all remaining satisfied and content." "I have tried, wherever I have gone, to see that the Indians be treated very well, allowing no harm to be done to them, always dealing honorably with them, and giving them many things of Castile to attract them to friendship with us." If the situation of the colony was still precarious, Balboa declared, the fault lay in past misgovernment and present neglect; but for his efforts and ability, "it would be a marvel if anyone were left alive."

It had not been easy, and Balboa was at no pains to make it appear so. The marches "by rivers and marshes and forests and mountains," the "evil nights and . . . days when one must risk death a thousand times," the repeated crises "when we were in such extremity that we thought to die of hunger," the desolation of an outpost left to perish by those charged with its support—were depicted with simple force. Against this background, "Consider, Your Highness, what I have accomplished and discovered, and [how I have] sustained all these people, without any help save that of God and my own industry." These were not empty claims ("in proof, I submit the deeds"); His Highness had only to compare Balboa's record with those of the Governors to see who served him best.

Having set forth his qualifications as eloquently as possible, Balboa added one final, transcendent argument for leaving him in charge: the manifest design of the Almighty. God, who had made Fernando master of Tierra Firme, who had preserved Santa María del Antigua despite mundane neglect, had chosen as His instrument Vasco Núñez de Balboa. "For this above all I give Him much praise and thanks every day of the world, and count myself the most fortunate man ever

born on earth. And since it has been Our Lord's will that by my hand before another's such great beginnings should have been made, I beseech that Your V.R.H. deign to dispose that I may carry it to completion." Fernando would be well served to second the divine intention: "I dare promise that if Your V.R.H. be pleased to send me troops, I will through Our Lord's goodness discover high things whereby may be secured so much gold and such riches that with them may be conquered great part of the world . . . and if this be not accomplished, I have nothing to offer but my head, which I put as forfeit."

On practical subjects Balboa shows a different quality; in fact, the more practical the matter treated, the better he appears. His geographical data were extremely good, for all that they had been given to him in unfamiliar languages and referred in great part to regions he had not yet been able to visit, "since," he remarked, "a man gets as far as he can, not as far as he would." Most of his estimates of distance check to within a few miles of scientific measurement. When he enlarges on descriptions of what he has seen, in the valley of the Bayano and that of the Atrato, he is at once accurate and vivid. If some of his information on mines and treasure was too optimistic, he had excuse: he believed what the Indians told him about them, and he knew that the future of the settlement hung on making Fernando believe it too. Gold was still the only convincing reason for trying to maintain a colony in that remote wilderness, and the only inducement which would bring men to risk their lives there.

All the rivers of the Pacific slope, and many of those in Careta, Comogra, Pocorosa, and Tubanamá, were reported to be heavy with gold in very beautiful grains. Darién itself contained many rich mines; twenty streams bearing gold had been identified south of the settlement, and thirty more issued from the coastal sierra; even Abanumaque, so unprofitable when discovered, was said to show great promise. The fantastically rich mines in the Andean Cordillera east of Dabaibe were reputed to produce nuggets as big as oranges, and the whole upper Atrato was a vast alluvial gold field. Recovery of the metal was simplicity itself, Balboa added, by native methods of panning or even by a kind of seining, and it was said that in some parts good results were obtained by merely burning off the grass from previously flooded areas.

(The information about the mines of the Cordillera and the upper Atrato was reasonably correct. Unfortunately, the men of Darién were never able to verify it, and more accessible sources belied Balboa's hopes. The Spaniards were indefatigable prospectors, and during the life of the colony they worked hundreds of claims in and around Darién, but from the eastern Isthmus they were able to extract between 1511 and 1520 only 41,000 to 42,000 pesos of legally registered raw gold.)

Balboa's goals were the Other Sea and the auriferous Cordillera, which in his opinion could be exploited only if two key positions were occupied: Dabaibe (a glorious prize in itself) and Tubanamá on the Bayano. Stating his program and specifying what was needed to put it into effect, he writes with point and almost terse assurance. Here he is not pleading or persuading—he is telling the King, and his approach is summed up in his own words: "Take it from me, Your Highness, as from one who knows . . ."

Because I desire that the things which I have begun here should flower and come to that state which is consonant with the interests of Your V.R.H., I wish to inform you what is expedient and necessary to command be provided for the present . . .

Until such time as the land is known and it is seen what there is in it, the principal requirement is that a thousand men should come, [recruited] from those who are in Hispaniola, because those who might come from Castile would not be worth much until they became accustomed to the country, and for the present would destroy themselves and us who are here with them.

Your V.R.H. should command that for the time being this land be supplied with provisions directly by Your V.R.H. This behooves you in order that the land be explored and its secrets known, and by it two results will be attained: first, much money will be earned in goods; and the other and principal is that, being provided with food, it will be possible to do and discover great and very rich things.

At the same time it should be provided that plenty of materials for building small river vessels be constantly available here . . . [words missing] . . . an abundance of tar and nails and sails and cordage. It is necessary that some master workmen should come, who know how to build bergantines.

Your Highness must order that two hundred crossbows be brought, made exactly to specification with very strong stocks and fittings . . . [words missing] . . . very quick-shooting and not above two pounds in weight. And from these much money would be made, because here everyone is happy to have a crossbow or two, since in addition to being very good weapons against the Indians they keep those who can own them supplied with plenty of birds and game. Two dozen very good lightweight espingards are needed, made of bronze because the iron ones are ruined at once by the heavy rains and eaten with rust. Your Highness should command that two dozen hand guns be made, of bronze because those of iron get ruined; it is enough that they be twenty-five to thirty pounds in weight, and long, so that one man can carry one of them wherever needed. And very good powder.

As soon as more people come, a fort must be built in the province of Dabaibe, as secure as possible because the country is well populated with evil people; another fort should be built at the mines of Tubanamá in the province of Comogre . . . and these forts, most puissant Lord, cannot be constructed at present of masonry or adobe, but must be built of a double palisade of very strong timber filled in the middle with earth mixed and packed, and surrounded by a very good secure fosse . . . and from these two forts, the one in Dabaibe and the other in the province of Comogre, we will go out through the land, and learn the secrets of it and of the Other Sea which is on the south side, and everything else that is needful.

Your Highness should order that artisans come to keep the crossbows in repair, because every day they get out of order on account of the heavy rain.

In everything that I have said, money will be made, and it need cost Your V.R.H. nothing except to command that the necessary reinforcements be provided; for I dare undertake, through Our Lord, to carry out everything that in these parts behooves the service of Your V.R.H.

Balboa's ideas as to suitable boats for use on the Atrato were as definite as his other concrete plans. Exploration, he said, could be done only in native dugouts not above thirty inches wide, since the narrow, vegetation-choked channels which had to be penetrated to reach firm ground were closed to larger craft. For postexploration

service, however, he proposed to build boats on the order of the lighters common in Spain, five and a half feet in the beam and long enough to be rowed by twenty oars; they would be fitted with sail for use at the season of the northeast trades, when vessels of up to seven toneladas' capacity could navigate the river under canvas if helped with the oars at some of the bends.

For their part, the colonists had formulated certain petitions expressed in a separate document, "the greater part of which," Balboa said, "it is best that Your Highness should concede." The vecinos wanted permission to take as slaves the Indians of Caribana and the lowlands east of the Atrato as far as Dabaibe and, since it would be impossible to control them in Darién, to sell or exchange them in the Antilles. The concession would be amply justified, Balboa urged, because the Indians in question were cannibals, wholly unprofitable, killers of Christians, and in general more deserving of total extermination than of mere servitude in exile. Once far from their own country they could be used to advantage by the Spaniards of other settlements, who would in turn send their difficult captives to Tierra Firme. Stretching a point (and his own claims to kindly fair-dealing), he suggested extending the scheme to include the natives west of the Gulf of San Blas, on the curious grounds that their land was rugged, jungled, cut-off, and fruitless.

Two other collective requests are seconded. The first was that the quinto on plunder be reduced from one fourth to one fifth: Balboa advised the King to grant it in his own interest, because the men were reluctant to jeopardize their lives in entradas unless the returns were high, "and nothing done unwillingly is ever done well." The second item was less important: that miscellaneous loot such as cloth and household effects be left to the settlers free of tax.

Before closing, Balboa made one recommendation and one vibrant plea. With regard to the recent attempted revolt, he urged that the guilty be punished not only in vindication of his authority but as necessary policy, since otherwise "no governor who might come here would be spared rebellions." And he begged that practicing lawyers, those demons in human form, be barred from the colony.

The two ships from Hispaniola left Darién in the last week of January, carrying, in addition to Balboa's dispatches, the representa-

tions of the frustrated rebel group. These last seem to have been: the writ of the so-called investigation organized by that deviser of iniquities, the lawyer Corral, which constituted a bill of accusation against Vasco Núñez; a request that some "prominent" person be appointed captain general of the colony; and a letter or letters for Colmenares designed to provide ammunition for the anti-Balboa campaign at Court. Sebastián de Ocampo bore a notarized power of attorney from Balboa, clearly defining the matters he was to treat with the King, and probably, for his personal use, a voluminous memorandum of "the whole truth" as communicated to him in conference with his principal.

Ocampo took his obligation very seriously; the pity was that his luck did not match his loyalty. He never saw the King, although he was able to insure tardy delivery of Balboa's letters, and when his reports were read, events had overrun them. Stranded in Cuba on the return voyage from Darién, he did not get to Hispaniola until sometime in October, and when at last he arrived in Spain he was desperately ill. For months, as he lay helpless in Seville, the guest of his cousin Alonso de Noya, he continued to plan a journey to Court. Availing himself of the privilege allowed the infirm, he bought an ambling saddle mule to carry him to Valladolid.

By June 1514 Ocampo knew that he would never go anywhere again. Summoning a notary, he transferred his power of attorney to his cousin Noya and to Francisco de Cobos, assistant royal secretary for the Indies, charging them to treat diligently of "the matters contained in the said power and no more. . . . And because he could not sign this, being sick and weak, the witnesses of this document signed for him." Even then he could not die tranquil. Again calling the notary, he dictated a letter to Noya, then absent from Seville. In it he repeats his instructions about representing Balboa, binds himself to pay a 50,000-maravedí indemnity if the terms are not fulfilled, and promises to Noya for his trouble "my dun mule, saddled and bridled, plus forty gold ducats." That is really all, but the letter is very long. One seems to hear the tired voice stumbling on, saying over and over the same exhortations and promises, in an increasing confusion of juridical provisions, urgency, and dun mules. He died a few days later.

A staunch and honorable gentleman, Sebastián de Ocampo. One hopes that Balboa learned eventually of his faithfulness.

In Santa María the early months of 1513 were relatively serene and almost entirely unrecorded. With the exception of a long anecdote about a marauding "tiger"—an episode which may have occurred later in the year—events must be pieced out from stray references in legal documents, cédulas, and "proofs of merit," confined almost entirely to ships and incoming colonists.

(The tiger was, of course, a jaguar—a bold fellow whose nightly raids decimated the small stock of domestic animals and were believed to have included human victims. He was finally trapped in a camouflaged pit and stoned to death. The settlers ate the meat, which they said was like beef (an indication of how long they had been deprived of the genuine article), and stuffed the skin to send an interesting, if rather gamy, present to Colón. Trackers found the animal's den, occupied by two newborn cubs whose mother was fortunately elsewhere; the babies were taken to the settlement to have iron collars riveted about their necks and then returned to the den. Subsequent investigation revealed the collars and their attached chains, but no vestige of the jaguar widow and orphans.)

Soon after the departure of the Ocampo ships, a Crown caravel came, bringing Alonso de Quiroga, who had originally been appointed veedor of barter and fort-building in Veragua. Quiroga collected 894 pesos in guanines for the royal quinto, started back to Hispaniola, and was never heard from again.¹ The next vessel appears to have been the caravel *Chapinera*—master, Alonso Martín Aparicio—with a cargo of pork and cassava from Hispaniola. Two other royal caravels, *Santa María* and *San Juan*, arrived with nearly a thousand pesos' worth of bacon and flour from the King's hacienda, sent by the officials of Santo Domingo; both were lost on the return voyage, one off Cuba and one on the coast of Yáquimo. No one mentions starry omens in this year, but mariners must have wondered: yet another ship came, later in the year, and was wrecked at the mouth of the estuary. She was owned and piloted by Juan de Castañeda, who got safe to shore with forty men who had come to settle in Santa María.

The dates of these arrivals are nowhere stated, but the approximate times can be deduced from clues embedded in scattered documents and letters. The same is true of the most important armada to reach Darién in 1513. This consisted of two ships (possibly the two already

mentioned, *San Juan* and *Santa María*), which had been dispatched by the *oidores*, the appeal judges who had recently been installed in Santo Domingo with ample powers to supplement, and curb, the government of Colón. The vessels brought a large number of new settlers—four hundred, according to Juan de Ledesma, who piloted one of them, a hundred and fifty by Casas' more acceptable estimate—conducted by a master mariner named Cristóbal Serrano, and including a well-to-do hidalgo named Diego Hernández. Serrano and Hernández, both good men who were to be prominent in the colony, were very different types. Serrano, a stolid, shy fellow of few words, had already achieved a prosperous position in Hispaniola, and in Tierra Firme proved himself a capable leader of expeditions, agreeably averse to politics and skulduggery. Hernández was a well-educated young man "of diligence and good conduct, and very well outfitted." He had gone from Seville to Hispaniola with Nicuesa, had been providentially prevented by illness from continuing to Veragua, and now arrived with a number of retainers, thoroughly armed and equipped. Balboa made him escribano of justice and public documents.

Although there is no record of even the month in which the *oidores'* ships reached Darién, it was probably not before June. In any case, it marked a great change in the colony, for Serrano delivered the King's cédula naming Vasco Núñez de Balboa Their Highnesses' Captain and interim Governor in Tierra Firme.²

This was the time of Balboa's rejoicing. Although command of the colony had been conferred on him by both popular vote and vice-regal commission, neither source was particularly solid. Democratic processes lend themselves to pulling down as readily as they do to building up, and the validity of any appointment made by Diego Colón in Tierra Firme could be questioned on several counts. True authority came only from the Crown; moreover, without a royally designated administration, the colony existed in a kind of official limbo. The King's brevet certainly gave Balboa "immeasurable pleasure," but it also gratified the settlers, who felt that Santa María now had identity and status. "With this joy and gaiety, those who wished him ill were set at liberty and reconciled with him," Casas writes, "though whether the reconciliation was fictitious or real I cannot say."

Unclouded moments are always brief, and this one was soon

dimmed by a shadow of coming events. "A short time later . . . or perchance by those same ships," Balboa received letters which indicated that his tenure would be short.

It has been presumed that the chief informant was Zamudio—which is quite likely—and that the burden of his letter was that the King, influenced by Enciso, had turned sharply against Balboa, which is untrue. Enciso was influencing no one seriously at the time the letter must have been dispatched from Castile, least of all the King, who was busy with a minor war and spent the last five months of 1512 in the field. Nor did Fernando evidence any displeasure toward Balboa in this period. What Zamudio could have said was that the King, plagued by three years of failure, conflict, and confusion in Tierra Firme, and wary of Colón, was resolved to make a fresh start with a governor of unassailable position and no factional allegiances. The post had, in fact, already been offered late in 1512 to a caballero of Avila, Comendador Don Diego del Aguila—a nobleman so neutral that little is known of him beyond his family's extreme piety. Aguila had declined, but it was to be supposed that His Highness was looking for someone else both eligible and willing.

This was disturbing intelligence, the more so as it undoubtedly coincided with news of what Colmenares and Quicedo had been up to in Santo Domingo, as well as of the way the Young Admiral, with his megalomaniac demands, was forcing the King's hand. Colón had, in fact, reached a point where speculation ran on the chance that he would attempt a coup in Tierra Firme. The prospect was not such as to induce Fernando to prolong there an unorthodox regime under a makeshift governor. Even now a new captain general might be under commission, and whoever he might be, he would certainly bring his own officers and a large number of followers. The existing order in Darién would be swept away; another leader and other troops would discover the high things and great riches, reaping where they had not sown.

Considering these things, Balboa came to a momentous decision. He would stake everything on a magnificent gamble—now, while his achievements would have the weight and luster of his position as the King's acknowledged representative. He would cross the mountains and find the Other Sea.

The men of Santa María approved the plan. If the undertaking was hazardous, the prize was well worth a risk. The advantage of snatching the gold and glory of the Other Sea before an influx of undeserving strangers arrived to share in them was obvious; the most illiterate *compañero* could do the simple arithmetic which divided the spoils by the low denominator of present numbers as against an alternative represented by hundreds of additional shareholders. The provinces of the other coast had been described as powerful states—but when, in the process of conquest, did the soldiers of Castile hesitate to invade a powerful country from which they anticipated golden rewards? After all, the inhabitants of the south coast were said to be courteous and amiable, and experience proved that courtesy and amiability in the Indians contributed notably to their undoing. If Tubanamá barred the high road to any force of less than a thousand men, they would by-pass Tubanamá.

Moreover, conditions in Santa María were more favorable than they had yet been in its tormented existence. There were about four hundred Spaniards in the settlement, and—a unique circumstance—they had been well fed for months. The natives along the “North Sea” as far as Pocosora were friendly, and could be counted on for assistance; the hostile tribes of the Atrato might in time attempt another offensive, but it seemed likely that they had not recovered sufficiently from the rout of the previous year to be a serious menace to the garrison left in Santa María. In short, if the settlers were to bring off the exploit on their own, it was now or never.

Once the expedition had been agreed upon, preparations were set on foot at once. It was decided to strike across the mountains from Careta, passing through Ponca, and Chief Chima was advised to hold guides and porters in readiness. Two hundred men were told off to remain in the settlement, including, of course, all those implicated in the late insurrection; reconciliation did not extend to admitting them to a share in the plunder and credit from this supreme entrada. About the middle of August a transport column of *naborias* and slaves was dispatched to Chima’s village, whither the expeditionaries would go by sea, in nine canoes and a small ship.³ When everything was done, on the last day of August, the men who were to leave attended a special mass, made their confessions, and received communion.

On Thursday, September first, Balboa and one hundred ninety picked companions⁴ embarked at the river mouth, and set forth for Careta, the Pacific, and immortality.

XIV

THE route selected by Balboa had several disadvantages, not least of which was that of conducting to the poorer part of the other coast. It was more rugged than that by the Bayano, and less settled. But it was short and, traversing no important chiefdoms, comparatively safe; the low Careta-Ponca pass could be traveled in two days and Chima's guides were familiar with the country.

There is a popular tendency to think that Balboa, going out into a blank unknown, struggled for nearly a month of uninterrupted marching to come, with wild surmise, upon an unguessed ocean. It should be remembered that he not only knew what he was going to discover, but also, thanks to his native friends, pretty much what he would find along the way. Furthermore, although it took twenty-two days to reach the Pacific, not more than nine or ten of these were spent in marching.

The nine canoes reached Careta on September fourth, and the ship one day later. Vasco Núñez lost no time in social amenities with his quasi-father-in-law. He wanted to be well away before the specter of another governor could materialize to hamstring his venture. The urgency which made him undertake the entrada in spite of the season—the tropical “winter” was due to begin—drove him out on the trail within twenty-four hours of reaching Chima's capital. Half of the men brought from Santa María were detailed to stay in Careta, which thus became the base camp. The others made up the actual exploring force: ninety-two men-at-arms and two priests, pledged to claim an ocean and all its coasts for their King.¹

The little company of Spaniards was escorted by hundreds of native porters, servants, women, and hangers-on; strung out in single file their column must have stretched for over half a mile. An observer stationed beside the path would have seen the ingredients of the Con-



Caribbean sea

Pacific Ocean

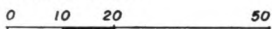
DARIÉN

Showing Urabá, the Eastern Isthmus of Panama and the lower Atrato Valley.

- ✚ Point of discovery of the Pacific.
- ➔ Balboa's Route-Expedition of Discovery-1513-1514

All modern place names appear in italics.

SCALE OF MILES



quest pass by in less than an hour: soldier-colonists of all sorts and degrees, some in steel cuirasses, ridged casques, and boots, but more of them at ease in cotton shirts and skimpy breeches, their feet in *alpargatas*; priests with their cassocks tucked high for marching, their faces as tanned and their eyes as wary as those of any *compañero*; Indians bent under the burdens of the vanquished, carrying the instruments of further vanquishment—armor, bags of gunpowder and shot, baskets and jars of food, trade goods, camp gear; the leashed war dogs, more terrible than guns and crossbows, and chief among them Balboa's Leoncico, who drew a bowman's pay.

Ponca, the first objective, was reached on Thursday evening after two days of stiff marching. As usually happened when the Indians were not taken by surprise, the Poncans had deserted their bohíos for the shelter of the forest. The expeditionaries settled down to wait for their messengers to find the chief and persuade him to return. Vasco Núñez was, by universal judgment, a restless man, happy only when employed in something constructive—preferably something which required physical effort—yet he could be extraordinarily patient in his dealings with the natives. It was one of his best cards. Other captains, greedy for quick profits and mindful only of the present gain, wrought havoc and passed on rather than lose a day; Balboa would wait, on hope of conciliation, aware that for the Indians time had small reality and that much of their hostility was bred of fear.

Chief Ponca, at length reassured, came back to the village five days later, on September thirteenth. Balboa ignored the delay, greeted him with ceremony as an overlord welcoming an honored vassal, and presented him with coveted gifts: cotton shirts and glass beads for elegance, little bells for fun, and iron hatchets for solid use. These methods worked like a charm. Beaming with good nature, Ponca responded with a number of pieces of finely wrought gold. Furthermore, after confirming the information about the Other Sea, "he told Vasco Núñez in secret many things that he was rejoiced to learn." It is interesting to speculate on how much of Balboa's success should be traced to Careta's daughter and to Fulvia, who had taught him to understand the people whose lands he invaded.

Ponca played host to the Spaniards for another week. On the morning of the twentieth, having sent twelve of his men (the sick list) back

to Careta, Balboa left for Quareca. This was the first piece of real exploration, but Ponca had given full instructions about the route and had supplied guides to insure that there was no mistake. The chief was not prompted by pure altruism; Torecha, lord of Quareca, was his enemy. The distance was not great, as miles go, to Torecha's village—no more than ten leagues—but it was the hardest part of the journey. For five days the Spaniards struggled through wild and hilly country, thickly forested and cut by rivers. The Indians, unencumbered by clothes, used the rivers as roads, for it was easier to clamber over rocks and fallen trees, to wade the shallows and swim the deeper spots, than to force a way through the forest. Weary and dripping, the *compañeros* ploughed doggedly after their guides, averaging at best five or six miles between dawn and dark. The general direction was southwest; across the Chucunaque and the headwaters of the Artigatí and the Sabanas. On the evening of September twenty-fourth they came to Quareca.

The village of Chief Torecha lay in the hills called the Sierra de Quareca, and although its altitude cannot have been great, the air was fresh and pure after the steamy jungles of the middle Isthmus. The *compañeros*, impervious to heat, complained that it was disagreeably chilly; but they can hardly have suffered much, for their stay was both brief and uncommonly active. It started with a battle. The inhabitants were Caribs—no doubt some of those barbarian invaders mentioned by Ponquiaco—and Torecha, braver and more ingenuous than Ponca, stood his ground backed by six hundred warriors armed with bows and arrows. Balboa (who saved his patience for uncertain or remissive chiefs) attacked at once. After a short but heavy skirmish, in which Torecha and a number of his men were killed, the Spaniards occupied the bohíos.

Once in the village, the expeditionaries made a discovery which shocked them inexpressibly. Certain Quarecan patricians were given to homosexuality; Torecha's own brother and two other *çabras* were found dressed in women's enaguas. "The abominable sin" admitted no forgiveness. Without compunction, Balboa ordered that the *cama-yoas* be given to the dogs. (The rather more horrible penalty prescribed by Spanish law would have taken too long to execute.)

After the summary reform of Quarecan morals, a little looting, and

a careful check of his data on the route to be followed, Balboa is said to have pushed on from Quareca on the day after his arrival, September twenty-fifth. This is the day enshrined in history as that on which European eyes first saw the Pacific Ocean—or more exactly, when they first looked on it from the Western World. Oviedo, who once had in his keeping all the documents of the expedition, including the journal kept by Andrés de Valdarrábano, notary and official recorder of the entrada, tells the story:

There in Torecha he left part of the troops, and departed with about seventy men;² and on the twenty-fifth of the month, the same day that he left, he reached the bohíos and seat of the chief named Porque, who had absented himself. Balboa did not bother with him, but passed on, pursuing his journey in search of the Other Sea. And on a Tuesday, the twenty-fifth of September of that year one thousand five hundred and thirteen, at ten o'clock in the morning, Captain Vasco Núñez, going ahead of all those he was conducting up a bare high hill, saw from its summit the South Sea . . .

Only two moments in recorded discovery can match this: that when Columbus, peering across the water in the moonlight, saw the low shore of Guanahaní straight before *Santa María's* dipping bow; and that when Magellan, after six months of voyaging, knew that he had truly sailed around the unknown to meet the known. These were greater achievements, but there was a special quality in Balboa's moment because he was alone. Just for an instant, as he stood there solitary between earth and sky, the immensity that stretched away below him was his and his only, vast and inviolate.

And immediately he turned toward the troops, very happy, lifting eyes and hands to Heaven, praising Jesus Christ and His glorious Mother the Virgin, Our Lady; and then he knelt down on both knees and gave much thanks to God for the grace He had shown him in allowing him to discover that sea, and in doing so to accomplish so great a service to God and to the Catholic and Most Serene Kings of Castile . . .

And he commanded that all those who accompanied him should kneel down likewise and give the same thanks to God, and should pray very devoutly that He permit them to discover and see the

great secrets and riches which lay in that sea and coast, to the greater exaltation and growth of the Christian faith and for the conversion of the Indians native of those austral regions, and for the great prosperity and glory of the royal throne of Castile and of its princes present and to come.

Everyone did so very willingly and joyously, and then the captain caused a fine tree to be felled, of which was made a tall cross which was planted and fixed on that same place and high hill from where that austral sea was first seen. And because the first that was seen was a gulf or bay entering into the land, Vasco Núñez commanded that it be called the Gulf of San Miguel, because it was the feast of the archangel four days later. And he also commanded that the names of all the men who were there with him should be written down so that the memory should remain of him and of them, because they were the first Christians who saw that sea; all of whom sang the hymn of the glorious holy doctors of the Church, Ambrose and Augustine, as a devout priest who was there, named Andrés de Vera, sang it with them, saying: "*Te Deum laudamus: Te Dominum confitemur.*"

Perhaps the list of discoverers was only drawn up afterwards, but it is pleasanter to think that it was there, under the still-green Cross on the hilltop, that Andrés de Valdarrábano sat down to write in fair script the names of the sixty-seven "caballeros and hidalgos and worthy men who were present in the discovery of the South Sea with the magnificent and most noble lord captain Vasco Núñez de Balboa, Governor for Their Highnesses in Tierra Firme."

One can picture the battered compañeros, still somewhat moist-eyed, tearing themselves away from the panorama of descending ridges and distant silver water to bend over the escribano, making sure that the memory of them should endure, while the Indians squatted beside their loads a little way off and watched the white men's magic with attentive eyes, wondering what these ceremonies meant for good or ill.

Having thus registered the discovery with both heaven and earth, the sixty-seven immortals marched down to a village near the shore of the Gulf, in the territory of Chape. The inhabitants had fled, but the empty bohíos made an excellent place to camp while waiting for the men left in Quareca to come up. On September twenty-ninth, as

will be told, Vasco Núñez went to the beach a mile or so below the village, and took possession of the Pacific Ocean for God and Castile.

It is almost painful to inject a practical, and what is more, a doubting note into the narrative of these high events, but that pre-eminent date, the date of the discovery, cannot be swallowed whole, four centuries of historians to the contrary. The hour—10 A.M.—is too uniquely precise to be wrong, but there is reason to believe that it is inserted into the calendar forty-eight hours too soon. Oviedo, following the log of the journey, says: "On a Tuesday, the twenty-fifth of September . . ." In 1513 the twenty-fifth of September fell on Sunday. The Tuesday in question was the twenty-seventh.

The error, if it is an error, was without doubt in the original relations—presumably in Balboa's report, since Martyr, who used this source, also has it. (The writ in witness of the participants bears no date.) It thus passed into the other early chronicles, all of which leaned heavily on Martyr. But Oviedo, writing from records kept while the expedition was in progress, couples a date with a day of the week on five occasions, of which four are correctly paired; only the "Tuesday the twenty-fifth" combination is wrong. The mistake could, of course, be in the day, were it not that circumstantial evidence points the other way. Oviedo's very phrasing is indicative: after saying that Balboa left Quareca on the twenty-fifth, and that he came to Porque on the same day, he continues, "And on a Tuesday . . ." and so forth. A numerical slip is easy to make, but *el domingo*, Sunday, stands out from other days, and had that been when the discovery took place it would surely have been so recorded. The expeditionaries, always piously observant and accompanied by two priests, could not have lost track of the Lord's day in the course of three weeks.

These are not, however, the only reasons that the twenty-fifth is at best a doubtful date. For if it is accepted, one must believe that after five days of extraordinarily arduous marching, Balboa fought the Indians of Torecha, took the village, discovered and executed the camayoas, collected gold and slaves, consulted the local people about routes and travel, fed his troops, made arrangements for those who were to remain behind, marched to the capital of another chief's

domain, passed on, and climbed a mountain—all between the night of the twenty-fourth and ten o'clock next morning. We must also believe that sixty-six other Spaniards were able to do the same—without rest, without complaint, and without exhaustion—and be fresh enough to make a long march in the afternoon.

The conquistadores were remarkably tough physical specimens, but they were scarcely up to a program of this kind, even had Vasco Núñez, after loitering for the better part of two weeks in Ponca, been seized with a sudden frenzy of haste a few days later. The way from Quareca to Chape was certainly easier than that from Ponca to Quareca, but it was little, if any, shorter. It is too great a strain to believe that the *compañeros* covered it in one day, with time out for all the varied activities in Torecha's village and for rejoicing, prayers, tree-cutting and cross-making at the hilltop. And it is equally hard to credit that Balboa, after such superhuman effort, proceeded to sit for days in Chape, within strolling distance of the goal of all his hopes, without even troubling to go and claim it. Is it possible that men who had won the greatest gamble of their lives, who had made a discovery to shake the world, would have loafed in a deserted Indian village from Sunday to Thursday, too indifferent to walk down and seal their triumph? But if they first saw the Pacific on Tuesday the twenty-seventh, the picture falls into perspective.

As for the peak in Darién, it was not, of course, strictly in Darién. In fact, it was probably not even a peak, in the grand sense of the word. The highest point in the Sierra de Quareca is some five thousand feet high, and this, the peak par excellence of the whole region, is usually assumed to have been the spot from which Balboa first saw the Other Sea. Certainly the apex of those pyramided hills would have been a magnificently appropriate stage for that hour of lofty drama. But it was far off the route of a column marching from Quareca to Chape, and in the improbable event that Balboa had chosen to make a singularly difficult detour in the interests of romance, his view would have been over the open Pacific, the coast of which would have been much nearer than the Gulf, and thus he would have had no discernible reason for going to Chape at all. There is, however, a secondary peak above the headwaters of two forks of the river of Chape (the Congo, which might be termed a multiple river).

It is isolated, precipitous, and rises 1800 feet above the hills at its base. No through trail would conceivably climb it. It cannot be excluded that Balboa, who knew so well where he was going that he could press ahead of his troops at exactly the right spot in order to be the first to view the Other Sea, turned aside to struggle for a couple of hours to its summit. But it is not likely. Poetry and tradition to one side, the sober fact appears to be that it was on an eminence of one of the southerly spurs of the lower range that, advised by his guides and hurrying a little so as to be the first, Balboa stood "when with eagle eyes he stared at the Pacific."

On September twenty-ninth, the feast of St. Michael and All Angels, Vasco Núñez went with twenty-six chosen companions to take formal possession of his discovery. To be exact, he declared claim to his discovery plus what the *cédulas* loved to call "things ad-joint, conjoint, accessory, and incidental thereto," with a splendid inclusiveness that stretched from Pole to Pole.

The Spaniards were in full armor, as befitted so solemn an occasion, and carried a brilliantly painted standard: the arms of Castile and Leon, surmounted by the Virgin with the Child in Her arms. (How it had been obtained, and how preserved, is a minor mystery.) They came to the shore of the Gulf about two o'clock in the afternoon. Here there was an awkward delay. It is to be presumed that Balboa and his companions had already walked down to the beach, but they must have done so in the morning, when the water was high. Used to the negligible tidal variation of the Caribbean, no one had calculated on the eighteen-foot rise and fall of the Pacific at this point. Unfortunately for the demands of pageantry, at two o'clock the tide was at ebb. Standing on the beach, the expeditionaries were confronted, not by an ocean waiting to be possessed, but by a vast expanse of wet, dark sand. Balboa was aware that, aside from the bathos of playing his greatest scene on a puddled sand flat, an act of possession was valid only when it accompanied physical occupancy of what was appropriated, and thus there was nothing for it but to sit in patience until "the water rose exceedingly in the sight of all, with great impetus." When the Other Sea had thus come to meet its discoverer, the ritual began. It was, in the expression of the times, something to see.

Vasco Núñez, his buckler on his arm, the standard of the Virgin and Castile upheld in his right hand, and in his left his naked sword, strode into the water until it washed about his knees. Then, tall in cuirass and plumed helmet, he paced back and forth, declaiming in sonorous and unself-conscious periods:

"Long live the most high and mighty Sovereigns, Don Fernando and Doña Juana, Kings of Castile and of Leon and of Aragon, *et cetera*, in whose names and for the royal Crown of Castile I take and assume royal possession corporal and present of these austral seas and lands and coasts and islands with everything annexed to them or which might pertain to them in whatever manner or by whatever reason or title might or could exist, ancient or modern, in times past, present or to come, without gainsay whatsoever.

"And should any other prince or captain, Christian or infidel, of whatever law or sect or condition he may be, pretend to any right to these lands and seas, I am ready and prepared to deny him and to defend them in the names of the Kings of Castile present and future, whose is this empire and the dominion of these Indies, islands, and mainland, northern and southern, with their seas, in the arctic pole as in the antarctic, on both sides of the equinoctial line, within and without the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn—so that each thing and part of it belong and appertain most completely to Their Highnesses and to their successors, as I declare more at length by writ setting forth all that may be said or can be said and alleged in behalf of their royal patrimony, now and for all time so long as the world shall last until the final universal judgment of all mortals."

No one saw anything funny in this verbal orgy; it was a thoroughly proper and satisfying oration, and the more fine words the better. Determined to leave no ground uncovered, Vasco Núñez—still standing in the shallows—followed his pronouncement with a series of questions directed at the *compañeros*. Did they acknowledge the absolute dominion and power of the Kings of Castile over this and every other part of the Indies, discovered or to be discovered? Would they swear to defend these realms sword in hand against any aggression by land or by sea? The men gave their oaths, and Balboa "took them in witness." Andrés de Valdarrábano wrote down their names.

They were, with few exceptions, curiously obscure names. The expedition included such leading vecinos as Alonso Núñez de Madrid, Esteban Barrantes, Lope de Olano, Martín de los Reyes, Juan Rol-dán; none of these figure as witnesses of the discovery or of the act of possession. Was Balboa so jealous of his glory? Or did he merely find the simpler fellows more reliable than the elite? Only four of those who attested the writ of possession were of any note: Father Vera and Valdarrábano, who were necessary to the proceedings, Diego Albítez, and Francisco Pizarro—and Pizarro had no special importance at the time. The rest were compañeros unadorned.

"These were the first Christians to set foot in the South Sea," says Oviedo, copying the list, "and they all tried the water with their hands, and put it in their mouths as something new, to see if it were salty like that of this other North Sea; and finding that it was salty, and having consideration of where they were, they gave infinite thanks to God . . .

"And Vasco Núñez, with a dagger which he carried in his belt, cut a cross in a tree, into which he dashed sea water in token of the possession thus taken; and he made two more crosses in two other trees, so that there should be three, in reverence to the most Holy Trinity. . . . And afterwards all those who were there made many crosses in other trees, and cut down some with their swords, so continuing the act of possession." This tree-cutting seems to have been a part of all such ceremonies. Exactly what it signified is not explained, and it may be that the Spaniards themselves had no inkling of what remote and pagan custom underlay it. In some way it stood for dominion, the sovereign power to dispose of the land according to the royal will.

The swift dusk of the tropics ended the symbolic hackings. Rather subdued after the emotion and uplift of the afternoon, the men of Darién walked back to the village. Vasco Núñez, one fancies, went a little apart, in silence, with Leoncico at his heels. He had come a long way since the September day three years before when, crouched in an empty butt, he had nursed his dog between his knees and listened for the voice of a bailiff. He was Their Highnesses' Captain General and Governor, Discoverer for God and Castile of the South Sea; he had land and slaves and treasure; Leoncico wore a golden collar. As he followed the darkening path, sword sheathed and the heavy helm

swinging from his hand so that the plumes hung limp, he must have felt tired and somehow empty. The master hour was over; there would never be anything like it again.

XV

A DAY or so after Balboa's comprehensive annexation of the Pacific Ocean and all lands contiguous thereto, relations were established with the Indians of Chape. The ruler of the province was a woman, and by the canons of romance she should have provided a colorful interlude in Vasco Núñez' career. Rather regrettably, it does not appear that he so much as saw her. All dealings were conducted with her brother, whose position seems to have been something between regent and prime minister, and who showed himself the soul of hospitality. The usual exchange of courtesies—kind words and trade goods for gold and pearls—satisfied him completely, and within a very short time he had conceived a doglike devotion for Balboa which was extremely useful.

It was pleasant enough to rest in the village, comforted by the attentions of Deputy Chief Chape, but Balboa was impatient of mere rest. He wanted to get on—to the coast of the ocean itself, and more especially, to the treasure-hoarding potentates, and to the islands of pearls. Unfortunately these latter objectives now appeared more complicated of attainment than they had from a distance. Scouting parties made disappointing reports. One of them had reached the sea, on the other side of the Chape Peninsula, but had found only a lonely cove, three stranded canoes, and a total absence of potentates. (One of the scouts got a canoe afloat, and thereafter boasted that he was the first Christian to navigate the South Sea.)¹ The Pearl Islands were a good twenty-five miles from the entrance to the Gulf of San Miguel, and for Balboa's purposes might have been twenty-five hundred, for the sea, belying its reputation, was anything but pacific. Chape explained that the last moons of the year were always stormy, and that it would be three months before the passage could be made. Eager to console

his restive guests, he proposed taking them to the province of Cuquera.

Cuquera, according to an old map, was in the hills north of Chape, from where it appears to have been reached via one of two main courses of the Río Congo. Taking some sixty men in eight dugouts provided by his helpful host, Balboa started on October seventh and landed the next night at the head of canoe navigation. The Cuqueran capital was eight or nine miles distant by a very rough trail, but the expeditionaries did not wait for daylight, and they reached the village at two in the morning. It must have been hard to feel a way in the darkness, but they probably used an ingenious aid to night marches based on the fire beetles called *cocuyos*. Cocuyos are furnished with powerful headlights that shine steadily for hours; the colonists had learned that one of them, fastened to the back of a *compañero's* cap, made a perfect guiding light for the men who came close behind.

At the sleeping village a shout from the Spaniards, intended to be reassuring, sent the Cuquerans flying pell-mell from their hammocks to the forest. When it was day the chief led his warriors back to retake the bohíos, believing that he had only Indians to contend with. One look at the bearded and terrifying strangers was enough to make them scurry again for the woods. With truly astonishing agility the *compañeros* succeeding in catching some of the fugitives, and Balboa was able to persuade one of them to carry soothing messages to his master. No doubt Chape, who had already adopted the white *tibá* as his own, primed the emissary with convincing arguments, for the same day (October ninth) Chief Cuquera ventured to present himself and make submission. The familiar routine of gifts and palaver followed, and shortly thereafter Balboa departed for Chape again, the richer by another ally, a comfortable tribute in gold and pearls, and much stimulating information as to how and where the pearls were procured.

Any Indian would have resigned himself to wait out the moon-struck turbulence of the South Sea, postponing a visit to the Pearl Islands until a more propitious season. The Spaniards were not so easily put off. Time was a consideration for them, and they had come to discount native estimates of danger, while the thought of forgoing a fortune lying almost to their hands was unbearable. After talking it

over (such matters were always subject to general discussion and agreement), Balboa insisted on attempting the trip. Chape, object of the insistence, at last gave way. It was a severe test of his new-found hero worship, but he passed it finely: he agreed not only to provide canoes and paddlers but to go himself with the party.

On October seventeenth, again with sixty men, the little flotilla set out. The dugouts were small and badly overloaded, and as soon as they rounded San Lorenzo Point they met strong winds and heavy seas which made every minute a struggle against disaster. Bending to their paddles with the energy of desperation, the Indians managed to make a tiny island by nightfall. It was a miserable refuge, partly awash at high tide, but it served. Although most of the food was lost, and the canoes, battered against the mangroves to which they were moored, had to be insecurely patched with bark and reeds before they could be used, no one was drowned. The next night, the eighteenth, they reached the mainland in the domain of a chief named Tumaca.

The landing place was on what is now called Punta Brujas (Witches' Point), some twenty miles north of the entrance to the Gulf of San Miguel; Tumaca's seat was located on the inner shore. Balboa, in no mood for another damp and hungry night in the open, left a few men to guard the canoes and pushed on in search of the village. He came to the bohíos at midnight, which was the wrong hour for a peaceful call. The inhabitants, who seem to have been late retirers, sprang to defend their homes, and some of them were killed before they finally broke and fled. Three days of mingled cajolery and threats brought the chief back to make submission; the well-tried formula of conciliation worked as before, and Balboa added another native friend to his growing collection.

Balboa had named the place San Lucas, because he had arrived on the feast of St. Luke. Tumaca told him that its real name was Chitaraga. The piles of oyster shells that had gladdened the eyes of the compañeros when they took the village were not, he explained, the result of pearl fishing; the oysters of his coast were gathered only as food. For the pearl-bearing variety it was necessary to go to the island of Terarequí, where any number of fine specimens could be picked up, some of them as large as fans, with pearls the size of beans or olives. This, combined with a tribute of two hundred choice

samples and a quantity of inferior ones, was more than enough to cancel in the Spaniards' minds the memory of their recent peril, and Balboa tried hard to persuade Tumaca to give him a seagoing canoe for the crossing to the Archipélago de las Perlas.

Tumaca was polite but firm. At any other season, he declared, he would be delighted to fall in with such a plan, particularly as Chief Toé of Terarequí, who was in the habit of coming over to the mainland and ravaging the weaker peoples of the coast, needed a lesson in deportment. He agreed with Chape, however, that the pleasing idea of turning loose his formidable new friends on the predatory island chief could not be carried out during the storm moons. Meanwhile, perhaps the white lord would like to see how the fishing was done in the Chitarraga oyster beds? These were not far along the coast, and a suitable canoe would gladly be put at his disposal.

With this Balboa was forced to be content. After several days of leisurely preparations, the big canoe was ready on the morning of the twenty-ninth. At this point the Spaniards made a fascinating discovery: the paddles—squared-off affairs rather like overgrown cricket bats, called *nahe*—were tastefully inset with pearls and aljófar. Departure was postponed while Valdarrábano drew up an attested memorial of this startling example of South Sea riches. The incident is probably unique, not so much because of the jeweled *nahe* as because Balboa contented himself with a writ of evidence instead of confiscating the exhibits.

Twenty-three of the expeditionaries, besides Vasco Núñez, found places in the canoe for the trip to the oyster beds. Working northward, they reached the promontory between the Majé (or Mahagual) River and the mouth of the Río Chimán. This bit of coast was called Tamao; two islets lay close inshore, and beyond them to the southwest the profile of Terarequí stood out clear and infinitely desirable across twenty miles of water. It was an exciting view, but not a satisfying one, particularly for Balboa. There was the main pearl island only a few leagues away, a prize for any explorer. He could look at it, map it, name it (Isla Rica), but until he had set foot on it he could not claim the special privileges of a discoverer in it.

He could, however, underline his general achievement and all that

it implied by another ceremony. Walking his men to the end of the point where Tamao protruded farthest into the sea, he called them to witness another and only slightly abridged version of the taking of possession. After all, the first rites, while undoubtedly valid, had been held in the Gulf; it was just as well to confirm them at the sea itself. This done, he turned his attention to the near-by islets. Valdarrábano—"a prudent man of great ability" who was anything but a lily clerk—was chosen to take six *compañeros* and a crew of twenty oyster fishers to check the story that Chitarraga bivalves were unproductive. The trip, short but hazardous, fully confirmed the chief's statements; three basketfuls of shells were opened without finding a single pearl, and a fourth basket load, brought back to the beach as a sample, proved equally barren. This exhausted the possibilities of an essentially uninteresting bit of coast, and the next day the party returned to Tumaca's village.

On Thursday, November third, Balboa bade Tumaca an affectionate farewell and started on the first stage of the homeward journey. Instead of doubling back to the Gulf of San Miguel, he planned to strike inland, via the Majé (Mahagual), and follow a route which would bring him to the Bayano River—his Río de Comogre. Chape, the ever-faithful, and one of Tumaca's sons went with him as guides and intermediaries. Again in small canoes, the expeditionaries were paddled through a maze of interconnecting *caños* and lagoons to emerge after the better part of a day on the main river. From here they made slow progress upstream, hampered by frequent portages and by the swift floodtime current. Since they reached the village for which they were aiming—the seat of a chief named Thevaca—on the morning of the second day, it cannot have been very far from the coast.

Thevaca was caught napping, but he accepted the inevitable with grace for the few hours his astounding visitors remained with him, and produced an unusually handsome contribution of gold and pearls. Balboa dismissed Chape here. The parting, says Martyr, was most affecting: Vasco Núñez thanked his friend warmly, "charging him to take good care of himself," the two embraced with affection, and Chape, at least, could hardly restrain his tears. The chief (or regent-

chief) seems to have left the same day with Tumaca's son and with ten compañeros who were to collect the Spaniards left in Chape and bring them overland to a rendezvous at the next village.

The next village was the headquarters of Chief Pacra, somewhere in the western spurs of the Sierra de Quareca at one day's march from Thevaca. Guided by Thevaca's favorite son, Balboa and his fifty men reached the bohíos on the evening of November fifth, weary after a steep and waterless climb through the late afternoon.

Chief Pacra was, by universal opinion, a singularly nasty bit of work. He was physically hideous; his habits were filthy; he was given to "the abominable sin"; he tormented his neighbors and made his own subjects' lives a burden. Balboa's native friends had supplied him with a complete and hostile dossier on Pacra, who appears to have been another Carib outlander, and when "the black chief"—a reference to his moral rather than his physical complexion²—came out of hiding, he received none of the bland advances which had been served his confreres. He met antagonism with antagonism, refusing to speak to his captors. Interrogated, not gently, on the gold mines he was said to possess, he remained stubbornly mute, and torture could not break his malevolent and contemptuous resistance. In the end he died, still silent. One cannot help feeling a sneaking admiration for Pacra, loathsome though he seems to have been; with all his viciousness, he yet had fortitude and pride.

Balboa christened the place Todos los Santos. In spite of Oviedo's remark that All Devils would have been a more appropriate name than All Saints, the village was agreeable enough, and it was the scene of one of Balboa's most successful pacifications. Nothing is so helpful to an incoming despot as a hated predecessor, and the Indians now looked on Vasco Núñez as a dragon-slaying hero. Obsequious çabras addressed him as "Warrior of the Sun" and "Emissary of Heaven." Divided between relief and trepidation, several neighboring caciques journeyed to All Saints with tribute: Tamao, who seems to have been in cautious retirement until now; Mahé; Etoque, brother of the lord of Tamahé, and Pacra's brother Thenora. Another called Bonanimana, came in with the compañeros from Chape, nervously voluble about his services as guide and protector, and (for Balboa's private ear) about the "secrets of the land." The compañeros, meanwhile,

ranged the hills round about prospecting for gold and finding nothing; Pacra's provocative silence on the subject had, it appeared, been only a bit of grim humor at their expense.

The expedition moved from Pacra on December first, heading almost due north across steep and broken country to the Cañazas River, largest source stream of the Bayano. It was the loneliest march of the whole entrada—the loneliest, indeed, of any recorded exploration of the Isthmus in those early days of relatively heavy Indian population—and in time it became a very hungry one.³ The first bohíos were encountered only at the end of five days: a village straddling the river, whose headman, Bucheribuca, had heard of the Spaniards' approach in time to decamp. Bucheribuca seems to have been a canny fellow, for he had left no food in the village, and while keeping out of reach, sent a diplomatic present of guanines and a message to the effect that his absence was due only to shame at having nothing edible to offer such honorable guests. Anyone could sympathize with the embarrassment of a manor lord in "that very fruitless land" faced with the prospect of eighty distinguished foreigners and several hundred compatriots dropping in for potluck; the tactful chief was written down as well intentioned and the expedition quickly vacated his bohíos to look for sustenance farther on.⁴ Three days later, tired and thinner than they had been for many months, the men of Darién marched into Pocorosa.

The tibá of Pocorosa was a major chief. His territory extended from the Caribbean to the Bayano; his capital seems to have been about where the Río Diablo joins the Bayano from the north. It is probable that Pocorosa knew a good deal more about Vasco Núñez than Vasco Núñez did about Pocorosa; in any case, he knew enough not to argue his entry into the province. Events followed their accustomed course: the chief first prudently removed himself, then yielded to persuasion and returned, and finally progressed through parleys and an unequal exchange of presents to a pact of friendship. The only difference between this and other peaceful agreements lay in Pocorosa's greater capacity for good or ill; more powerful in his own right than other chieftains of the region, he was further strengthened by the natural readiness of weaker neighbors to make common cause with him. The importance of his attitude was to be demonstrated not two

years later, when other captains demolished the good will with which Balboa had imbued the chief.

The expedition had arrived in Pocorosa on December eighth, and friendly relations with the tibá were established on the thirteenth. The next day, two messengers of a theretofore unregistered chieftain—Chuirica, whose land lay on the other side of the Bayano, southwest from Pocorosa—came in with a spontaneous offering of guanines. On the sixteenth, the saco Paruraca, vassal to Pocorosa, came with a handsome present and many declarations of friendship. This was conquest made easy, but Balboa had by now added one more item to his agenda, an essay in subjugation until then held too dangerous to try. Bold with repeated success, he had determined to move on Tubanamá and bring its tibá, Tamaname, to submission.

Tubanamá lay sixteen or seventeen miles west of Pocorosa. Balboa timed his march so as to arrive at the village two hours before dawn, and attacked at once. As it turned out, past fears and present caution were both exaggerated. Tamaname was neither so strong nor so bellicose as he had been made out, and he had not made the slightest preparation for defense. He was captured, in company with two favorites and no less than eighty concubines, in the rapid skirmish which resulted in occupation of the village, and held in hostage while the Indians brought in gold to buy his freedom. Three days later, on December twenty-first, Balboa set him at liberty, presumably considering that his subjects had paid as much as he was worth. Martyr says something about Tamaname's "Sardanapalian Court," which suggests unbridled luxury, but the reference was to the overstocked harem; the capital appears to have consisted only of two enormous houses, one of which was reserved for lodging warriors when they were summoned for service.

Pocorosa, hopeful that greed would lead the Spaniards to destroy a hated neighbor, had insisted that there were valuable mines in Tubanamá; Tamaname, by now very expansive, denied this vigorously but was loquacious about mines at a convenient distance from his domain. Amiably skeptical, Balboa did not press the point, but he ordered that some quiet prospecting be done. Considering that the places tested were selected because the color of the earth looked promising, the results were surprisingly good: from a few scattered pan-

nings made the day after Christmas the prospectors got nearly a peso of gold. Balboa did not raise an issue over it. He had no intention of cleaning up Pocorosa's rivals for him at the cost of creating awkward enemies for himself, and he was aware that if a single uncontested ally in a given zone was good, two mutually antagonistic ones were better. His leave-taking from Tamaname was cordial, with no embarrassing mention of concealed mines. The tibá, whose ideas of elegance and policy were very like those prevalent in Spain, entrusted his son to Balboa as criado.

The complete submission of Tubanamá is in one way the most remarkable episode of the entrada, because by this time the Spaniards were in a state of obvious exhaustion. Some of them were too weak to walk alone, and Balboa himself was suffering from a severe attack of fever—his only recorded illness in years of pioneering—so that he had to be carried in a hammock. How was it that, so physically diminished and outnumbered thirty- or fortyfold, they kept the Indians subservient and Tamaname obsequious to the end? A sick commander and sixty worn-out soldiers, they left Tubanamá as victors, taking with them gold, serfs, and effusive assurances of fealty.

Picking up the balance of the troops in Pocorosa, Balboa proceeded to Comogre, where he arrived on New Year's Day. The old chief had died, and Ponquiaco, who had assumed his father's baptismal name, ruled in his stead as "Don Carlos." Carlos II greeted Vasco Núñez as a long-missed brother, entertained the company royally for four days, and crowned his hospitality with a gift of twenty marcos of gold.⁵ He was well satisfied with the hatchets and trade goods he got in return, and frankly uplifted when Balboa, who had an instinct for such gestures, presented him with his best shirt. On January fifth, restored and cheerful, the expeditionaries took the trail for Ponca.

Chief Ponca, by now another firm friend, was delighted to play host to the colonists. But Balboa was eager to get back to Darién, and his impatience was fed by the news, brought by four compañeros from Santa María, that two ships had arrived from Hispaniola with provisions and some new settlers. As head of the colony, it was clearly desirable that he take delivery of the cargo and charge of the recruits in person; besides, the ships might have brought fresh information from Spain as to the King's intentions. If he could send a report by

them of his glorious entrada, it might possibly get to Fernando in time to stave off the dispatch of another governor. Leaving most of the troops in Ponca to follow at leisure, Balboa took twenty of the strongest men and two hundred Indians, and pressed on to reach Careta on January seventeenth.

Swinging down the trail to the coast, Balboa could review all he had accomplished, marshaling the story he would tell the King. We must suppose him proud; no man could do what he had and fail to realize his stature. And it may be taken that in his mind the grounds for congratulation were more solid than glamorous.

No one could claim that Balboa's great exploit has been under-admired, but one may wonder if it is always appreciated for the right reasons. The true measure of his achievement is that it was not just a saga of stamina and chance, much less the blind adventure of popular legend. It was a carefully studied campaign, wisely and competently executed. Perhaps any baquiano captain, sufficiently provided with troops, determination, and native guides, might have crossed to the Pacific. But what other conquistador could have carried out, at the worst season of the year and with a force which never exceeded eighty-five men, four and a half months of successful operations in potentially hostile country, receiving the unreserved allegiance of tribes which for centuries thereafter admitted no other Spaniard to their confidence? Balboa accomplished it without a reverse, without losing a man, and without leaving one active enemy behind him.

Submission had not been arrived at by unadulterated kindness. Oviedo says that while the record makes no mention of cruelties on the South Sea entrada, "they were many," and (although the indictment might have come more gracefully from someone who, unlike Oviedo, himself abstained from harshness) he was probably right. After all, slavery was a perfectly respectable institution and torture an accepted procedure; loot and captives were the legitimate rewards in war against unbelievers. Like other conventional practices, they were censurable only when misused. That Balboa applied them in Tierra Firme is unquestionable, but it is equally clear that he did so with discretion. For proof, as he would have said, look at the facts: he had come back with both the spoils of victory and the affectionate

esteem of the vanquished, as much a hero to the Indians as to his own men.⁶

Now indeed he could boast that he had made great beginnings, helped only by God and his own ability and at no cost to the Crown. It is a tragic irony that while he was laying the foundations for the kind of domination-by-consent that Fernando sought with such persistence and ill-success, the expedition which was to destroy them was being prepared, at vast expense, in Spain.

Driven by desire to be in the settlement before the ships could leave and by the sharp foretaste of triumph, Balboa barely paused in Careta. The rest of the expeditionaries would have to go by land or wait until vessels could be sent to fetch them, "it being no weather for canoes." But the little ship in which he had started was in port, and on the evening following his arrival in the village he embarked with his twenty companions and sailed for Santa María. On Friday, January 19, 1514, he came to anchor in the estuary of Darién.

XVI

IT IS probable that Balboa was never happier than in the triumph of his return to Santa María. He was experiencing one of the deepest satisfactions any man may know: the kind of wholehearted, spontaneous applause that is, more than an accolade, a revelation. Balboa was like the craftsman who, having fashioned a masterpiece in toil and daily absorption, first sees his achievement objectively—reflected fresh, whole, and splendid in the mirror of public acclaim. Even to an unworldly artist, popular success can be very sweet after the pure and painful joys of creation. Balboa, a healthy extrovert whose thoughts leaned more to practical advantages than to romance, would have savored it to the full.

Almost immediately, however, the bloom was off. It was removed by an important arrival from Spain: that of a *visitador*, which means not a visitor but an inspector. This was Pedro de Arbolancha, who

was now functioning as a confidential agent of the King. Arbolancha was also a merchant whose ships had plied the Indies ever since 1496, and in that guise he had sailed from Castile with goods for San Juan and Hispaniola and a shipload of provisions for sale in Santa María.¹ But his real mission (known only to a limited official circle) was to check on the situation in Darién and to inform the vecinos that Tierra Firme, already reorganized as a Crown colony, was about to be blessed with a new governor and a large number of new settlers.

Fernando had given his envoy a cédula addressed to "the squires and worthy men our vassals, who are in the settlement of Darién and in any other part of the provinces of Urabá and Veragua." In a few lines the King expressed gratification over the results obtained despite great hardships, enjoined concord and continued effort ". . . because in addition to being yourselves profited thereby, you will lay on me the obligation to do you favors," and announced that ". . . as you sent to beseech me, I will very shortly send a distinguished person who will have charge of the government of that land, with whom will go such an armada and supplies for you that with it the things of that region can be carried out as behooves God's service and ours." There was no mention whatsoever of Vasco Núñez de Balboa.

Arbolancha proceeded to fill in the laconic terms of the cédula. He was able to do so in some detail, and to furnish Balboa with an explanation of its clamorous silence as to Their Highnesses' captain in Darién, because, although his instructions to go "quickly and secretly" to Tierra Firme had been dictated on the same day as the letter to the colonists (June 11, 1513), he had not left Spain until late September.² By that time basic organization of the new administration and its supporting expedition were practically complete. So, it had seemed, was Balboa's fall from grace. And on both points Arbolancha, confident of the King and of the royal officials, was thoroughly informed.

What he had to tell was this:

The King's decision to provide a new system of settlement for Tierra Firme had been constant ever since the end of 1511, when he learned of Nicuesa's and Hojeda's fiascos. He had reaffirmed it to the officials in Seville at the time he summoned the unfortunate Governors to Castile: "So far as the Tierra Firme business is concerned, there is nothing to be said except that . . . it is necessary to provide for

this in a different way than heretofore." The idea had failed to grow at once into a project because of nearer emergencies—in particular, the war for possession of Navarre—which pushed the affairs of the orphan colony in the Isthmus onto what is technically known as the indefinite list.

In November of 1512, still at field headquarters in Logroño, Fernando again turned his attention to Tierra Firme, whither it had been directed by Colón. The Young Admiral had brought another suit, specifically for control of Veragua and Darién; but what particularly aroused Fernando was a letter in which Colón announced that, having had no word from Tierra Firme for nine months, he was preparing to send a caravel and a bergantín to Santa María. The information was intended to soothe, but it irritated the King exceedingly.

"You should not have waited nine months to succor people so forsaken," he answered sharply. "I suspect that because they were not helped in time, some evil will have befallen them, which God forbid." For the future, His Highness continued, Colón need occupy himself with Tierra Firme only if asked for further aid; the matter would be dealt with in Spain. The offer of the governorship of the mainland colony to Diego del Aguila coincided with this letter.³

What sort of choice Aguila would have proved cannot be judged, since his talents and temperament are unknown. He could hardly have been worse than the eventual incumbent. Six months later he might have accepted, but at the time he was approached, command in Darién looked to be a singularly thankless job, and despite considerable pressure he refused to consider it. Meanwhile the blackout of news from Tierra Firme persisted. "I am extremely worried over Tierra Firme," Fernando wrote to Pasamonte, "not knowing what has happened or is happening or how things are there. . . . Try to find out in every way you can, and by the first ship to come here, send me a long, complete and veridical account of it and of what should be done, because I shall be most anxious until I know."

Three weeks after this letter was dictated, Quicedo and Colmenares arrived in Spain. For some reason they delayed in presenting themselves at the Casa de Contratación;⁴ their dispatches, however, were delivered promptly and had a galvanic effect on the royal officials. The information in the reports seemed so significant to Matienzo and his

colleagues that within a few days they had formulated a proposal for a large expedition to Tierra Firme, and sent it off together with the reports to the King in Valladolid. The officials' covering letter was dated May nineteenth; burning the road, the courier reached Court on the twenty-third. Eight days later he set out again for Seville, carrying Fernando's explicit instructions for the preparation of an armada—to be carried out, His Highness said somewhat breathlessly, "without losing a single day for it would be a great loss to lose it."

This electrified excitement was caused by the confirmation of the vast extent of the mainland, by the promise of immense riches—corroborated by that lost quinto of 15,000 pesos, now learned of for the first time, and above all by the assurance that there was really another ocean only just beyond known territory. And the news had come at exactly the moment to have maximum effect. Aside from the domestic problem of Colón's pretensions, the scope of which increased with every new discovery, there was a larger one regarding Portugal.

The original prize of discovery, direct trade with Asia, had been snatched by Portuguese explorers. There had been a Portuguese viceroy in India ever since 1505; in 1511 Magellan had reached the Spice Islands, and it had just been learned in Spain that Portugal had already established a base in Malacca, threshold of the Chersonese and gateway to China. Since the bulls and treaty which fixed the Line of Demarcation were silent as to what should happen on the other side of the world where the Castilian and Portuguese zones again converged, and since possession would clearly be the whole law, it was apparent that unless Spain could get to the Antipodes, any questions of jurisdiction over them would be purely academic. Furthermore, it was reported that Portuguese ships had again been trespassing in the Caribbean, and that two or three more were being fitted in Lisbon to go to Tierra Firme.⁵ In these circumstances, the news from Darién was a match to a ready-laid train.

Thanks to this urgent enthusiasm, Arbolancha could inform the colonists that before he left Spain they had been provided with a governor—elderly, pretentious, inexperienced, and in the opinion of their procuradores undesirable; with royal officials who would control the economic life of the colony and participate in its government; with a lord bishop and full chapter, and with anything from a thousand

to three thousand fellow settlers, all of whom had been promised holdings. He could also tell them that the majority of the future colonists were impecunious scions of noble families, without knowledge of the Indies, and that every civil and military post had already been filled in Spain.

The feelings of the vecinos can be imagined. Nothing is more disconcerting than an overample answer to prayer when the emergency has passed. They had asked for seasoned reinforcements when Darién was a neglected outpost reduced to eightscore men; having thus besought a nicely calculated rain in time of drought, the now flourishing colony was about to be swamped by flood. Rewards won at bitter cost would go to strangers; baquiano conquistadores would have to take orders from green captains who would doubtless be as presumptuous as they were incompetent. The true veterans, who were most affronted, had a further cause for misgiving: Enciso was coming back in relative triumph as alguacil mayor, armed with writs which boded ill to anyone who had been in Darién in 1511.

If the outlook was distasteful to the vecinos, it was much worse for Balboa. He had farther to fall. Also, he was slated for a *residencia*: the routine investigation, roughly equivalent to a grand jury investigation without the jury, to which all outgoing functionaries were subject. The *residencia* of a dismissed governor could be, and usually was, a field day for anyone who had a grievance or could think up a claim. It began with a broadcast invitation to submit demands and charges; its presiding judge (the *alcalde mayor* of the incoming administration) was furnished in advance with a summary of such complaints as had reached the higher authorities during the defendant's term of office, and with special briefs on specific allegations. The open season for ex-governors lasted from thirty to sixty days, but consideration of the matters presented in that time could be prolonged. In general, the magistrate was disposed to be lenient; had it been otherwise, every former executive would have been in the poorhouse, at very least. But the normal exaggeration of accusations and claims left a wide margin for severity. And severity, Balboa learned, was what he could look forward to.

It developed that Colmenares and Enciso, while not particularly united in other ways, had been as one in their efforts to ruin Balboa.

(Quicedo, though generally assumed to have taken the same line, seems to have trailed far behind. The only complaints he is known to have made were comparatively mild.)

Enciso had come to life in the spring of 1512, when it was apparent that neither Nicuesa nor the colonists' denunciation of his own acts were likely to turn up. There is no evidence that he pressed any criminal charges against Balboa and the vecinos during the months which followed, or asserted then a right to two thirds of the gold in Darién plus Hojeda's share as governor. But he did present a demand before the Royal Council for expenses and loss of income, covering the period from March 1511 "to date," and it was a masterpiece of its kind. By the time he had reckoned traveling expenses to Spain, living expenses for himself and two servants, the estimated cost of a (then) hypothetical return to Darién and the fees which he might have earned had he never left Hispaniola, he had built up a total of a million and a quarter maravedies. The Council, no innocents themselves in games of this kind, settled it for forty-three thousand including costs.

This appears to have ended Enciso's activities as a litigant until after the procuradores arrived from Darién. He said later that in the interim he had a considerable part in drafting certain ordinances regarding encomiendas in the colonies. These were the outcome of the deliberations of a special council convened to consider Crown policy with respect to the Indians, and while no one else mentions the bachiller in connection with it, he may well have been retained to assist in putting the regulations into proper form; a payment made to him of 20,000 maravedies was perhaps in recompense for his services. From the fact that he got the promise of a permanent *regiduría* in Hispaniola and permission to take five slaves from Spain, it seems that he meant to return to Santo Domingo.

When reorganization of the colony in Tierra Firme was launched, Enciso was quick to see a chance to recoup his fortunes and salve his pride. The procuradores had been rather to the fore in ejecting him from Darién, but this was no time to say so. For one thing, as fellow accusers of Balboa, they were too useful, and for another, they could be too dangerous. Colmenares alone might have been attacked with impunity, but he could not be divorced from Quicedo; and to attack Quicedo, entrenched in the favor of the King and the Casa, would be

to invite the most damaging reprisals. On the other hand, whether or not the procuradores made with him a pact of mutual forbearance to their common convenience, they were unlikely to arouse the sleeping dog of Enciso's ouster on their own initiative.

The assumptions that Balboa was in disrepute for six months mainly because of the treatment Nicuesa had received, and that Enciso and the procuradores were the accusers on this count, are not supported by the documents. On the contrary, everything indicates that they studiously avoided a subject on which they were vulnerable. The self-righteous chief justice, the veedor who had incited the settlers against the governor under whom he served, the lieutenant who had rejected his commander, were awkwardly placed to accuse anyone else. Whatever Colmenares said to Martyr over dinner, whatever Enciso told his friend Oviedo, they were careful to keep the Nicuesa affair out of their formal arraignments. The royal order to investigate the matter was probably procured by Nicuesa's brother Alonso and his attorney Vergara. And neither the King's cédulas nor the judge's report suggests that the charges were held to be of paramount importance.

Quicedo's complaints were not serious. Aside from a claim for unpaid salary, which concerned Nicuesa more than Balboa, he presented only two: that he had been deprived of a lot on which he had started to build (presumably when distribution was made after Nicuesa's men came from Nombre de Dios), and that because he took no part in expeditions he received no share in the booty—which was just what the rules prescribed. Colmenares was vaguer but much more virulent. Prosperous by Balboa's favor, he prudently stuck to generalities about heinous "excesses and abuses," and to describing Balboa as an unscrupulous tyrant who "ravaged the country like a wolf."

Enciso told a long and tangled story, beginning with his contribution to Hojeda's venture and the alleged delegation to him of authority in Darién, and working on to his detention by the colonists (" . . . and they treated me very badly so that I would die"). Suspecting that neither his claims nor his personal discomfiture would be considered sufficient grounds for the results he wanted, he added two charges calculated to jolt Fernando into action—neither of which, incidentally, was directed specifically against Balboa. The first was that

the colonists habitually spoke blasphemously of Our Lord and with great disrespect of the King, and the other was that they had stolen twenty-eight pounds of the gold taken in Darién.

However hardened to the mudslinging proclivities of his subjects, Fernando could not dismiss them out-of-hand. Some of the mud might be genuine. And in this case he had nothing to set against the picture of a conscienceless frontier gangster. Zamudio, resentful and uneasy, had handed over to the *procuradores* the business entrusted to him, and faded quietly from the scene;⁶ Valdivia had vanished; Ocampo had not yet been heard from. The men who could speak for Balboa were in Darién. More than half convinced that Vasco Núñez and his associates were guilty as charged, the King ordered a rigorous investigation, and trial of such people as should be indicted in consequence.

Such instructions for judicial action were always couched in the terms of the accuser, so that to the unaccustomed reader the defendants appear to be already dead ducks. Only after seeing how often the accused emerged unscathed can one evaluate the apparently intransigent documents. The instruction regarding Enciso's charges ran true to form, down to the usual order to punish the guilty ". . . with the maximum penalties consonant with justice and equity." However, they made a special case of Balboa. If brought to trial and convicted, he was not to be sentenced. He was to be sent to Castile, while his property, duly inventoried, was held intact pending a decision of the King and his Council.⁷

The immediate returns to Balboa's accusers were moderate to nil. Enciso came off best. The office of *alguacil* was a considerable come-down from that of *alcalde mayor*, but it could be made to pay well, and the advantages of going back to Darién as sheriff were obvious. The *bachiller* also received two grants-in-aid, the promise of another for his wife, and permission to occupy one of the King's houses in Seville at the same rental paid by the previous tenant. And he was authorized to requisition from the Governor, when on official business, ten men to serve him: three musketeers, two crossbowmen, a game beater, two fishermen "with their weights and nets," and "a man with a mill"—plus one woman whose duties were not stated. The *bachiller* thought of everything.

The *procuradores* each got, as such, an allowance of 25,000 mara-

vedies and the promise of a permanent regimiento when and if such should be instituted in the colony. Their complaints were to be investigated and settled in such fashion that ". . . neither party in the case have cause for protest." Quicedo was given his old post of veedor, and when he died soon after, his widow and family were granted various compensatory favors. Colmenares, however, was rather conspicuously neglected. What he had hoped to gain is not clear, though if the petitions he submitted in 1515 are a criterion, he aimed high. The only things he is known to have asked for were a royal captaincy and the office of custodian-executor of estates. He got neither. An official custodian of estates was allowed a percentage of the property he handled, and could generally augment this by assorted fees and simple graft; most of them staved off an accounting for years, during which the principal came in nicely for their private use. It must have been galling to Colmenares, when later men were dying by the hundred in Darién, to figure what he might have made from such wholesale decease.

Colmenares' only real satisfaction, in fact, was the success of the anti-Balboa campaign. Even this was to be temporary, but for a time it was undeniable. While documents in Tierra Firme were referring to "the Most Magnificent Lord Don Vasco Núñez de Balboa, Governor for Their Highnesses," cédulas in Spain had ceased to call him so much as captain. He had become "one Vasco Núñez," or "a certain Velasco Núñez de Valboa."

The prospect which faced Balboa was both mortifying and alarming; six months earlier he might have thought it hopeless. Now, however, he could consider that the game was not lost. His adversaries held high cards, but he had the joker: he had discovered the Other Sea. He could present a roster of newly submissive chiefs and a quinto of over five thousand pesos in gold alone. He was no longer an escudero elevated to temporary consequence and anxiously promising future performance; one blazing exploit had given him uncommon standing. Darién was lost to him, but there remained the other coast, unstaked country on which he had earned a moral option. Balboa determined to ask the King for the government of the Pacific slope, westward through Panama and Coiba.

Arbolancha was heartily in favor of the proposal, so much so that he was prepared to back it financially. He handed over his cargo to Balboa, with the understanding that the proceeds from its sale would be invested in the future gobernación. He was evidently confident that Fernando would grant the petition.

Balboa's critics always attributed his successes in gaining adherents to intimidation, bribery, or personal charm. None of these explain the support which Arbolancha—who, rather oddly, was never said to be dishonest—gave so wholeheartedly. Balboa's grace and gallantry, like the fighting prowess that enabled him to "cleave a man from crown to navel in one blow," were fine traits in a captain, but the Indies were full of stout fellows bred to battle, and many of them were charming. Some of his other qualities as a leader may have weighed more: his habit of taking the hardest tasks on himself, his fair distribution of booty, his refusal to abandon a comrade, the way he cared for the weak or wounded as tenderly "as if they had been his father or brothers." Even Oviedo said that in these things "no other captain who has come to these Indies did better, or even as well." But it took more than this to turn an honest examiner and a shrewd businessman into a partisan.

Arbolancha must have heard much good of Balboa in Hispaniola when he stopped there en route to Tierra Firme. The source was Ocampo, in from his forced sojourn in Cuba and about to leave for Spain. Arbolancha, Ocampo, and Pasamonte were friends and sometime partners, and it is significant that it was at this time, *before* knowing about the discovery of the Other Sea, that Pasamonte abandoned the anti-Balboa attitude induced by Colmenares, returning to his original one of approval. What the visitador saw in Darién bore out Ocampo's best reports. The dazzling competence of the expedition to the Pacific was impressive enough as it stood; it was more so when taken as a manifestation of Balboa's peculiar attribute: that most uncommon common sense.

From cédulas written after Arbolancha had reported in Spain, it is clear that he described Balboa as a conquistador who came close to the King's ideal: one with more policy than impulse, more vision than avarice, who with the conquered could keep that precise balance

between forcefulness and flexibility which made him "feared and beloved."

Arbolancha sailed from Darién just before mid-March. He took with him Balboa's reports; an inexperienced map of the discoveries which baffled Fernando and his officials; the royal quinto; the petition for a gobernación on the Pacific coast; and a letter from the colonists to the King saying "how greatly Vasco Núñez has served Your Highness and the ability he has to so serve better than anyone else." In Santo Domingo he delivered to Pasamonte the reports which Balboa had tactfully addressed to the Treasurer—prompted thereto, one may guess, by Arbolancha himself, wise in the ways to royal favor—and Pasamonte promptly wrote to Fernando, urging Balboa's cause. The King's agent got back to Spain in the latter part of July, having crossed on the way the armada outward bound for Tierra Firme.

The disappearance of much of the correspondence of the time can be explained by carelessness, ill-kept files, an occasional fire, the habit of scraping off documents in order to use the paper a second time. The early disappearance of every record of Balboa's discovery is explicable only by deliberate subtraction. The reports were in duplicate. Pasamonte forwarded his set to Castile, and it is most unlikely that he did so without having a transcript made for his own files; we know that the originals were delivered at Court. At the Casa de Contratación, where dispatches from the Indies were first received, summaries were made for the King and Royal Council, and frequently for Chancellor Cisneros; in the case of especially important communications, the summaries were so full that they almost reproduced the exact text. Yet not one report, copy, or extract of Balboa's accounts of the expedition to the Other Sea survived, and the rather extensive records of the entrada which Oviedo saw in Darién in 1514 vanished with the same completeness.

In view of the possibly imminent arrival of the new Governor, Balboa remained in Santa María after Arbolancha left. However, making the most of the time left to him, he dispatched Andrés de Garabito, with eighty men, to explore an alternate route to the Gulf of

San Miguel. This route, much used by the Indians south of Darién, took off from Bea and crossed from the headwaters of the Río Arquiati (Balboa's Río de los Anades) to those of the Paya fork of the Tuira River. The pass involved some almost perpendicular climbs, and was thereafter known as La Trepadera—literally, "the clambering place."

Very little is known of the entrada, which is commemorated chiefly in the name the expeditionaries gave to the Río Tuira. They called it El Río del Suegro, which means "The River of the Father-in-law," because Chief Chaoca of Tamahé, lord of a territory on the right bank near its mouth, gave his daughter in marriage to Garabito by the native rite. Balboa seems to have limited the expedition to reaching the Gulf of San Miguel, and the whole thing could have been done tidily in a month. Garabito, who visited the chiefs of several tributary rivers, may have been away for six to eight weeks.⁸

In June all the colonists were together in Darién. Ocampo would not have recognized the settlement where a few-score famished compañeros had welcomed him as a savior. Some recent arrivals had brought its Spanish population to over five hundred men. It was secure from hunger and attack. It had two hundred houses, a church, a hospital-poorhouse. Between them the settlers had fifteen hundred Indians to serve them—a meager number by the standards of other colonies, but adequate in view of the fact that seasonal labor on the farms was done by gangs of natives from outside, the greater part of them apparently furnished by Careta.

In short, the colony was in admirable shape to hand over to a new administration. If the thought that it was also in fine shape to carry on under its own power was painful to the vecinos, they were at least spared foreknowledge of what it would become within a few months.

XVII

CREATION of an administration and a defined policy of conquest and colonization for Tierra Firme, plus that of a large armada, meant

a great deal of hard work. Considering what Fernando and his ministers accomplished in the summer of 1513, it seems as if they must have dedicated to it their every waking moment. Consultation on all aspects of the undertaking kept couriers shuttling between Valladolid and Seville, but whereas Matienzo and his colleagues in the Casa labored mostly over matters of ships, supplies, and recruits, the King's prime concerns were the principles of government and selection of executive personnel. The plan for the religious establishment in the colony was also his province.

Fernando's chief advisers were Fonseca, always at his elbow, and Lope de Conchillos, royal secretary for colonial affairs and Chief Escribano and Veedor for the Indies. They all drove into the manifold tasks before them as if they feared that Tierra Firme, and the Other Sea with it, would vanish unless pinned down at once as a Crown colony. On one well-filled day the King dispatched thirty *cédulas* treating of everything from cotton shirts to official policy, in addition to reviewing and signing one law, two edicts, and a proclamation.

With respect to this youthful energy, it is worth noting that the people who exhibited it had all passed the threescore mark. There is an idea today that men of that time withered on the vine at an early age; a recent work describes Columbus, at fifty-one, as "already an aged man according to the notions of his day." Actually, the notions of the day took small account of years. Without going into a catalogue of the vigorous men of sixty to eighty and better who figured prominently in Spain and the Indies, it may be remarked that Fernando was sixty-one, Fonseca sixty-two, Conchillos a year or so older, and Matienzo, Treasurer of the Casa, a little older still. The Chancellor, Cardinal Cisneros, adviser on the highest level, was seventy-six; three years back from conducting an army to Algeria, he was busy with two absorbing projects—foundation of a new university and preparation of the famous Polyglot Bible. And Pedrarias Dávila, whom they selected for governor of the untamed territory in Tierra Firme—a caballero lately distinguished for his hardihood in battle, whose nine (legitimate) children counted at least seven under fifteen years of age—was by his own showing rising seventy.¹

(Oviedo suspected Pedrarias of exaggerating his age. He may have done so, though it is hard to see why. All that is proven is that his

father was born before 1410, and that he was fifth of the eight children born of his father's first marriage.)

Pedro Arias de Avila, or Dávila, generally called Pedrarias, was the grandson of Diego Arias, who had been Contador, Treasurer, and power behind the throne of Enrique IV. His father, Pedro Arias, had also been Enrique's contador and favorite, and the fact that he subsequently joined that monarch's adversaries had rather improved his position. Pedrarias' mother was of the illustrious Carrillo-Hurtado clan; his uncle, who left him a fortune, was Bishop of Segovia; his elder brother had been made a count for his services to the sovereigns. His wife, Isabel de Bobadilla y Peñalosa, came of a family long close to the throne, and was the favorite niece of an extraordinary lady who had been Queen Isabel's dearest friend. Nevertheless, although some genealogists sought to link him with the flower of medieval chivalry, Pedrarias was a parvenu—and, by contemporary standards, one with a much-washed but still discernible stain on his antecedents. Behind Grandfather Diego, who had begun his rags-to-riches career as an itinerant peddler of spices, was a most plebian Jew who, it was said, had married a tavern maid.

Most of what we know of Pedrarias in youth and middle age is expressed by his nicknames. He was called "The Jouster" for his skill in the lordly sport of tourney, and "The Gallant" because of the magnificence of his dress and the casual ostentation of a spendthrift habit. He married late, possibly only when his uncle, the Bishop (who, pursued by the Inquisition in Spain, had found refuge with the Pope), died and left him wealthy. In 1510 he suddenly achieved renown in the Algerian war. He returned to Spain a hero, to receive a citation for valor, promotion to colonel, a complementary addition to his bearings, and another sobriquet, "The Lion of Bugía." The laurels were undoubtedly deserved; one could wish that he had rested on them instead of going on to earn his final nickname of *Furor Domini*. Physically, he was fair-skinned, with pale green eyes and red hair.

About Doña Isabel's looks we are told nothing; she does, however, break through the contemporary silence about her sex which makes one long for a female chronicler. Rather surprisingly, the intensely masculine Spaniards admired women "of virile spirit," a description applied to several daughters of the Bobadilla line. One gets the im-

pression that Lady Isabel was essentially stronger than her autocratic husband; certainly the Wrath of God was no match for her in a showdown. Pedrarias, who doubtless felt that nine young children would be better for a mother's care, wanted her to remain in Spain; Isabel had made up her mind to go to Darién. She went. Martyr, recounting this to the Pope, gives her very words (presumably jotted down through the keyhole by a handy reporter) as she carried her point in a long, well-turned speech instinct with nobility. She was to prove, in the end, her husband's best asset, although in 1513 the most effective one was Bishop Fonseca.

Pedrarias was Fonseca's man, and the Bishop looked after his own. When (before the middle of June) the announcement that Pedrarias had been chosen as governor provoked heavy protest, he flattened the opposition with the easy efficiency of a steam roller. The appointment was ratified on July twenty-seventh. Three weeks later Pedrarias took oath of office before the assembled Council. The obligations laid on him were read one by one, and to each he swore obedience in fealty, pledging to their fulfillment "his person and his property and his lands now owned or to be owned wherever he may have and hold them."

Herrera says that no governor, before or after, was required to go through a ceremony of this kind, and that it was proof of Fernando's mistrust despite Fonseca's persuasions. The unusual checks and controls which hedged Pedrarias would seem to bear this out. His wings were trimmed to the point where he was little more than the chairman of a governing board composed of the Bishop of Darién and the three royal officials in the colony, without whose consent he was powerless to make decisions and issue directives. Furthermore, the customary permission to name his own *alcalde mayor*—a privilege to be prized by any governor, as bringing the judiciary neatly in line with the executive—was canceled. The King himself appointed a chief justice, forbidding Pedrarias to interfere in judicial matters.

The three royal officials were Alonso de la Puente, treasurer, Diego Márquez, contador, and Juan de Tavira, factor.

Puente, the senior official, was the successful son of a distinguished father. He belonged to the royal guard (the hundred *continuos*, or *continuos, del Rey*), and was secretary to the King's beloved grandson,

Prince Fernando. A scheming, opportunist fellow with the principles of a ward boss, Puente was by far the most intelligent member of the administration. For some reason—perhaps because he was sickly, or because of the old-womanish malevolence of some of his letters—he gives the impression of envenomed old age; it is a slight shock to find that he was only thirty-five when he went to Tierra Firme. He too is undescribed as to appearance, beyond that statement by the chief doctor of the colony that he was “of a choleric humor”—in other words, liverish. One imagines him sallow and bony, with a long nose, a pinched mouth, and eyes set rather too close together.

Diego Márquez, the contador, had been page to Fonseca and criado of the Constable of the Court, Bernal de Pisa, whom he had accompanied to the Indies in 1493. On that occasion he had served as veedor on one of Columbus' ships; later he was an assistant veedor in Hispaniola. There must have been some reason to select him for comptroller of the new colony, but it is not apparent. Almost all that is recorded of his prior service is that he held up Columbus' fleet in Guadalupe by losing himself on an unauthorized raid, and that again A.W.O.L. in 1508—this time in Spain—he was brusquely ordered to return to his duties by the first ship. As an official, he followed the line of least resistance. One glimpses him only rarely in Darién: a figure without definite contours, proceeding in tow to Puente with a kind of passive perfidy.

The functions of a treasurer and a contador were exactly what the titles suggest; those of a factor were the custody and management of Crown property, from cargoes to estates. The man chosen to be factor in Tierra Firme was an impecunious hidalgo who somehow enjoyed the protection of Fernando's daughter, the Queen of Portugal. Through her he had secured a place at the Castilian Court as Butler of the Audience Chamber. An unassuming person of the “I'll just vote with the majority” persuasion, Tavira could be stubborn in his own interests. Though inexperienced, he had a natural talent for business: in his quiet way he milked his position to yield him a fortune in a few years.

The chief justice, appointed in September, was Gaspar de Espinosa. Oviedo says that although Espinosa called himself a *licenciado* his degree from Salamanca was merely that of bachiller, and recently

acquired. If this were so, he was a mature student, for he was at this time between forty-five and fifty years of age. Judging from the effort he made to be firm and impartial during his first months in Darién, his intentions were excellent. Unfortunately he could not stay the course. He was not made to sacrifice fortune to the cause of pure justice, and before long he learned to prefer plundering raids to the austere satisfactions proper to his calling.

The most important second-rank functionary was Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, the future chronicler. Indeed, thanks to an accumulation of offices, royal favor, and a strong personality, he was very nearly first rank. If it be true that he suffered the minor drawback of bastardy, his father (or, possibly, mother) had great influence. As a child, he was page to the King's cousin, Alfonso of Aragon; at thirteen, he was chosen to be companion to the young heir apparent, Prince Juan. After Juan's death he traveled in Italy, stayed for a time at the Neapolitan Court, returned to Spain in the suite of the Dowager Queen of Naples (Fernando's sister), and wound up as a Court escribano. In 1512 he was named secretary to Gonsalvo de Córdoba, the *Gran Capitán*, who had been commissioned to go once more to campaign against the French in Italy. Like Pedrarias, who had also expected to go with Córdoba, he had been left at a loose end when the expedition was canceled.

Oviedo was appointed chief escribano of the colony in July, and after Quicedo died, "bloated and as yellow as the gold he went to seek," he was given also the post of chief veedor. Self-assured and critical, he was a trial to Pedrarias and the officials, who could neither exclude nor control him. As veedor, he checked all gold, pearls, slaves, and miscellaneous loot; as chief escribano he drew or registered all documents and attended official conferences to keep the minutes. And in both capacities he was responsible directly to Spain, as Conchillos' deputy.

(Oviedo married thrice, and about his last two wives he has little to say. But of his first wife—"my Margarita"—he speaks at length and with unashamed emotion. This lady of perfect loveliness and gentle virtue died after three years of marriage, never having recovered from a terrible childbirth which turned her hair—a shimmering flood which was so long it trailed on the floor—"from true gold to

purest silver." "God lent her to me," he wrote when over fifty, "He took her . . . and I cannot speak of it without tears, nor cease to grieve for her while I live.")

Aside from minor posts, the annual budget for the civil list of the new colony was as follows:

Governor	Pedrarias Dávila	366,000 mrs.
Treasurer	Alonso de la Puente	200,000
Treasurer, for assistants		50,000
Contador	Diego Márquez	200,000
Factor	Juan de Tavira	150,000
Chief Justice	Gaspar de Espinosa	150,000
Veedor and Chief Escribano	Oviedo	120,000
Alguacil Mayor . . .	Martín de Enciso	76,000 ?
Lieutenant to the Governor	Juan de Ayora	72,000
Physician	Rodrigo de Barreda	50,000
Surgeon	Hernando de la Vega	30,000
Surgeon	Juan de Enrique	30,000
Apothecary	Francisco Cotta	30,000

The medical corps was expected to augment salaries with fees; other people, like the veedor-appraiser of precious stones and the director of smelting and assay, received token wages and a percentage of what they handled; notaries needed no salary, since their fees were fixed at five times the rates current in Spain.

Dr. Barreda was an eminent physician of good family, who had been attached to the Inquisition. He went to Darién with his wife, but left again after six months. Ayora, Pedrarias' lieutenant, stayed an even shorter time—and that was far too long. He had been picked because his elder brother was the Governor's bosom friend, but the choice was unfortunate. For the excesses of some of Pedrarias' subalterns one can find, not excuse, but at least a reason; Ayora, who did

more harm in less time than any of them, was a senseless destroyer, as stupid as he was vicious.

Since all colonists were *ipso facto* soldiers, the military list was small, and so, except for officers, was the pay. Nevertheless it was heavy on the budget:

Commandant	100,000 mrs.
5 royal captains	240,000
10 escuderos (the Governor's guard)	180,000
15 corporals	202,500
30 <i>peones</i>	355,000
180 men	1,620,000

The commandant (*maestro de campo*) named by Fernando was a reluctant gentleman who had been quite happy as warden of the castle of Alfaro. He did not dare to refuse the appointment, but he found a succession of excuses for postponing his departure. In 1516 he was still on the branch in Spain, and there is no evidence that he ever saw Darién. Of the royal captains, two were killed by the Indians, a third left the colony in 1515, another—middle-aged and innocuous—was remembered chiefly for his subjection to a singularly unattractive Spanish mistress, who later succeeded in marrying him. The fifth was Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, who stayed only a few months in Tierra Firme. The captains who became famous and infamous in the Isthmus were men of Pedrarias' choosing.

The religious organization of the colony proceeded as vigorously, and as optimistically, as the political. The plan was for a cathedral in Santa María del Antigua and, if it could be managed, a general patriarchate of the islands and mainland of the Indies. The choice for bishop fell on Fray Juan de Quevedo, provincial of the Franciscans in Andalucía and preacher of the royal chapel, who accepted the charge in July. The candidate for patriarch was, of course, Fonseca.

At this point the colony had a bishop, but no bishopric. The Catholic sovereigns of Castile had papal license to make ecclesiastical appointments—subject to purely formal ratification—but they could not invent new sees, much less patriarchates. Thus Leo X had barely assumed the triple tiara before he was presented with a petition from

Fernando, beseeching creation of a diocese in Darién and a universal patriarchate for the New World. The Aragonese Ambassador in Rome, urged to put the matter through quickly, got results in less than a month, though they fell short of those hoped for. The scheme for Fonseca for patriarch came to nothing, but on September fifth the Pope issued a "lead bull" which instituted the diocese, with cathedral church in Santa María, and promised that the church and its bishop would have "all the privileges, immunities, and favors enjoyed by the cathedrals and bishops in Spain."² It was the first bull of Pope Leo's reign, and it cost Fernando 787 gold florins.

Quevedo was a big, black-haired man, in character rather like Fonseca. His role in the colony went far beyond his episcopal duties. He was a kind of vice-governor, designated to be chief executive whenever Pedrarias should be absent or otherwise unable to attend to his functions, and he was to have a voice in the government at all times. The voice of a bishop spoke louder than that of a mere layman, and Quevedo's was freely exercised. Since it was usually in opposition to those of the other members of the administration, he was not popular with his colleagues. This disturbed him not at all; his secular power was braced by his mitred spiritual authority, and he was perfectly aware that Pedrarias was rather afraid of him. He became Balboa's only influential ally, and so long as he stayed in Darién he was able, by a mixture of suasion and simple browbeating, to champion his protégé to some effect. The pity was that he did not stay quite long enough.

Quevedo took with him eleven priests and two friars. (The latter were the customary attendants on a bishop, and he had made a point of having them.) The dean of the chapter, Juan Pérez de Zalduondo, who was appointed directly by the King, remained in Castile until the early part of 1515. Father Pérez was not a gentle shepherd, and, if Oviedo is to be believed, would have been more in his element as a conquistador than as a cleric. He was an exception to the armada rule in so far as experience went, for he knew both the Indies and Darién: he had been a priest in Hispaniola, and had gone to Santa María in 1510—probably with Enciso, with whom he left in 1511. Pedrarias claimed that he took thirteen additional priests, but this seems to have been a bit of retrospective exaggeration. Finally, there were some

Franciscan friars under a provincial named Diego de Torres, and possibly a few Dominicans.

Tithes to maintain this establishment were, in Fernando's opinion, too much to ask of the colonists in the first years, and he therefore promised to support it from the Crown revenues. The Bishop was assigned a salary of two thousand pesos ("converted at 456 maravedies for each peso"), a handsome amount compared to other salaries in the colony, but modest in relation to the incomes of most bishops in Spain. Other stipends and living allowances brought the budget for the Church in Darién to about 1,850,000 maravedies.

Obviously, the civil, military, and religious lists were absurdly out of proportion to the resources of the colony. Even after deaths and departures had cut the costs, Puente put the total at over five and a half million maravedies. As Balboa and the Bishop pointed out, this meant that sixty to seventy thousand pesos would have to be wrung from the Indians each year, in tribute or in "good war" (Quevedo's phrase), before the quinto could cover basic expenses.

The trouble was that Darién had been oversold. The most effective promoters are the enthusiasts who believe their own propaganda; Enciso and the procuradores—and, for that matter, Balboa—hooked on their own lure, were convinced that their reports of fabulous riches were no more than the truth. Furthermore, they were corroborated. The treasure obtained by Bastidas, Cosa, and Guerra from a few coastal villages was a fact. So was the lost quinto of fifteen thousand pesos. Two or three hundred ill-fed, ill-equipped settlers *had* gathered, in six months and without going more than forty leagues from Santa María, sixty thousand pesos of wrought gold. It was not unreasonable to think that as soon as Tierra Firme began to be systematically exploited, the colony would wallow in gold; or to suppose that if the promise of the Other Sea were fulfilled, Darién could be the gem of the overseas realms.

In this belief King Fernando formed a government, invested—or more properly, sank—some twenty million maravedies in an armada, and labored to devise a pattern for this first mainland colony that would be the prototype of Spanish dominion in the New World.

XVIII

KING FERNANDO (who should have known better) hoped that the armada would be ready to sail before winter. It was not his fault that it was not; working with the impetus, application, and slight detachment from reality which mark high officials at grips with a project, he had finished everything of importance in his province by mid-August. Somewhere along the cédula-strewn road the name of the colony had taken shape. It was to be called Castilla del Oro.

The King had early decided that it should bear a name which fittingly associated the idea of Castile with that of gold. (The term New Andalucía, left over from Hojeda's time, had never taken hold.) Castilla del Oro was always the favorite, but Castilla Dorada ran it close, and there were other entries less happy, such as Castilla Aurisia and Castilla Aurífera. A threat to call it Bética Aurea (derived from Betis, the ancient name of Andalucía) got into some of the documents, but it was luckily stillborn. The territory to which the name applied was rather casually described as "a very large region previously called Tierra Firme," from which Veragua as well as Paria and more remote coasts were excluded. Oviedo says that it was later defined as extending from Cabo de la Vela to Veragua.

Although this was the first time that organization of an overseas possession was done from scratch, the general scheme of government had already been evolved by trial and error in Hispaniola, and its structure presented no new problems. On the other hand, a great deal of study went into the documents which laid down the technique of conquest and colonization.

The basic, or perhaps one should say the conventional, motive for conquest was expounded in the cédula of appointment to Pedrarias: ". . . that Our Lord be served in the said land, and that His holy Name be known, and the inhabitants of the said land be converted to our holy Catholic faith." In the case at hand the Pope had been asked to provide prelates and learned priests to these pious ends, ". . . and

for the safety of those persons it has been necessary to provide a certain number of people who would go to settle in the said lands . . . for this, we have ordered a great armada . . .”

No doubt man celebrated the dawn of reason by justifying aggression on moral grounds, and the habit will die only with the human race. It would be a mistake, however, to dismiss Fernando as a slick imperialist covering acquisitiveness with a transparent varnish of piety. He believed in his mission to save the Indies quite as much as in his right to rule them; it was not by chance that he budgeted more for the Church in Castilla del Oro than for the civil administration. If his directives for dominion-through-persuasion were partly prompted by the consideration that well-treated Indians were, in the long run, more profitable than badly treated ones, they are nonetheless admirable. Or, at least, ninety per cent admirable. There was a residue which strikes a different note.

Policy with regard to the New World had rested from the first on two simple tenets: that the kings of Castile were, by divine sanction, “sovereign proprietors” of heathen lands discovered west of the Line of Demarcation; and that the natives of those lands were free, but not equal, subjects of the Crown. At the King’s orders these principles, together with the practices which derived from them, were subjected to examination and judgment by the special Council of 1512 and by certain independent authorities on religious and civil law. Since a small minority group—the Dominicans of Hispaniola—passionately sustained the thesis that Castile had no moral right to conquest, hearings were stormy. The upshot was orthodox enough: sovereignty over the Indies was ratified, the status of the Indians remained unchanged, and the encomienda system was held legitimate provided it was regulated to insure the well-being of the *encomendados*.

What was extraordinary was the fact that the matters were debated at all.

It must be admitted that there is something fantastic in the picture of an absolute monarch who, in the course of acquiring a fabulous empire, invites critical discussion of his right to sovereignty in his new realms. Moreover, Fernando had done so at the instance of the group which denied that right in the Indies, and specifically, on the insistence of a friar named Montesino, whose sermons in Santo Do-

mingo had come close to an incitement to native rebellion. This incendiary idealist made his points by verbal assault-and-battery (he could terrify a dying woman to repentance with a brimstone eloquence that aroused Casas' warmest admiration), and he had reached the King by forcing himself unannounced into the royal apartments. Nevertheless Fernando heard him out. And when Montesino ended his recital of cruelties and greed with the question: "Is this what Your Highness commands?" Fernando's reply was a forceful: "No, by God, nor ever so commanded in my life!"

The shock of Montesino's revelations undoubtedly spurred the King to act. But it must be concluded that the kind of action he took was dictated by political judgment. The Dominicans who were cutting at the root of overseas dominion were not many, but it must have been clear that the sooner the whole subject was settled, the better—and that, by an authority which would be unquestioned. The jurists and theologians summoned by the King were most eminent. It was inevitable that most of the judges should be churchmen: the questions before them were moral ones, and involved the authority of the Pope. Where Fernando showed special sagacity was in choosing a majority of Dominican arbiters, although it was the Franciscans of Santo Domingo who spearheaded opposition to Montesino and his collaborators.

Although *encomiendas* had been approved in theory, and regulated in practice by a new body of laws and ordinances designed to safeguard the Indians, Fernando was still doubtful about them. He advised Pedrarias that they were to be avoided if possible in Castilla del Oro. The ideal system, the King thought, would be to induce the chiefs to lend the colonists twenty or thirty per cent of their available workers in rotating shifts of one or two months each. Should *encomiendas* be instituted, the decrees concerning them were to be scrupulously observed: no excessive labor; time for daily recreation; regular vacations; pay in kind; no forced servitude of women, light tasks only for pregnant women, and exemption from all work for those in the last months of pregnancy; adequate food; regular instruction in the Christian faith. The Indians' property rights were to be respected, and they were to have time to look after their affairs and to cultivate their own land.

Pedrarias was bound by these rules, and by others set forth in the

King's instructions to him.¹ The gist of the latter was that the Indians were to be attracted to friendship and obedience, not forced. The methods which the Governor was to use were kindness, patience, and good faith. Promises, Fernando said, should be made only when they could be kept to the letter, for, once made, they must be fulfilled. No Indian women might be taken against their will "to be used as wives": a first offense would be punishable by confiscation of all property, a second (mysteriously) by the same penalty doubled, and a third by exile.

Whatever the plan adopted for securing native labor, only a reasonable number might be taken from one village, and these never by force. Their tasks were to be as light as possible, because, Fernando pointed out, Indians were not accustomed to regular work, and needed time to adjust themselves to it. For instance, if the rivers were as full of free gold as they were said to be, miners could be spared digging for a considerable period. In general, it was better to exaggerate in the matter of concessions and favors than to strain the ordinances to get full measure in service and tribute. A special decree even authorized Pedrarias to grant complete exemption from tribute in cases where careful study showed it advisable.

The colonists were to be strictly controlled. No abuses, no damage or injury, no unauthorized raids were to be tolerated; fear, the King observed, is at the bottom of many uprisings, and when the Indians saw that the Christians were humane and honorable, and through persevering instruction came to comprehend the Christian doctrine, they would "be sooner brought to the knowledge of God." "More is gained by converting 100 in this manner," Fernando remarked, "than 100,000 by other means."

There remained the case of those Indians who might refuse friendship, vassalage, and Christian salvation. Even these could not be warred against unless: (a) they had constituted themselves aggressors by armed attack and (b) they had been given ample opportunity to hear the "Requirement" (of which more anon) in repeated readings, expounded in their own tongue, so that they really understood it. Fernando warned Pedrarias that the Spaniards, eager for an excuse to seize naborias, would "much prefer that the Indians should be hostile than at peace," and were therefore not to be trusted in their

statements as to the attitude of the natives; it would be better to consult on matters of this kind with the clergy, "who have less passion and hope of satisfying their personal interest."

All in all, one can subscribe to Martyr's opinion that the decrees and instructions were shining examples of benignant justice to newly born nations on the part of a nation splendid with years.

The Requirement—*el Requerimiento*—was a famous proclamation composed in 1513 for the use of conquistadores. Enciso, with misplaced pride, later claimed to have contributed largely to it, but it was essentially the work of the eminent jurist, Palacio Rubios. Approved not only by the Council and the Franciscans, but also by the Dominicans, its purpose was to inform the heathen of their manifest duty to embrace the Christian faith and to accept the rule of "the most high, most puissant and most Catholic defender of the Church, always victorious and never vanquished, the great king, Don Fernando."

The obligation was explained with simple logic:

God Our Lord, one and eternal, created the heavens and the earth, and a man and a woman from whom we and you and all men in the world are descended and begotten . . . but because of the multitude of generations that have followed in the five thousand years and more since the world was created, it was necessary that some men should go to some regions and others to another, and that they should be distributed among many realms and provinces, because in one alone they could not support themselves.

All these people, the Requirement continued, and the earth itself, God had put in the charge of "someone called Saint Peter," who thus became lord of the world. "This person was called Pope, which meant admirable, supreme, father, and guardian"; his capital was Rome, "as the place best adapted for governing the world," but could be established anywhere else if desirable. St. Peter's authority, accepted by all people then alive, had passed with equal recognition to his successors, and so it would continue to the end of the world. And in due course one of these Supreme Pontiffs had donated the islands and mainland of the Ocean Sea to the sovereigns of Castile, "as is set forth in certain writs . . . which you can see if you like."

Having thus ably conducted the putative listeners from the sublime generalities of the Creation to the immediate particulars of the Spanish domain, the Requirement went on to say, with more tact than truth, that almost all the other inhabitants of the Indies, informed of the facts, had willingly accepted them:

Therefore, as best I can, I entreat and require you to understand well what I have told you, and to study it and deliberate on it for such times as is just, and that you recognize the Church as mistress and superior of the world universe and the Supreme Pontiff called Pope in her name and the King and Queen our lords in her place as overlords and masters and sovereigns of these islands and mainland by virtue of the said donation, and that you consent and allow that these religious fathers expound and preach the aforesaid to you.

If you thus do . . . Their Highnesses, and I in their name, will receive you with all love and charity, and will leave you your wives, sons, and property, freely and without servitude. . . . And they will not compel you to become Christians except if you, informed of the truth, desire to be converted to our holy Catholic faith, as almost all the inhabitants of the other islands have done. And besides this, His Highness will grant you many privileges and exemptions, and do you many favors.

So far, good. But the last section is as shattering as a bomb at a Sunday-school picnic.

If you should not do so, or should interpose perverse delay, I promise you that with God's help I will powerfully invade you, and make war on you in every region and manner of which I might be capable, and I will subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and of Their Highnesses, and I will seize your persons and those of your wives and children and will make them slaves, and as such I will sell them and dispose of them as His Highness might command; and I will seize your goods and do you all hurt and harm which I can, as to vassals who will not obey or accept their lord and who resist and deny him. And I declare that the deaths and damage which might grow out of it will be your fault, and not that of His Highness, nor mine, nor of these caballeros who accompany me.²

A curious and terrible document. It might be observed that even secular conquest has been more or less on these lines until very recently, and in some important parts of the world still is; some people might think that the fiercely absolute Christianity of Fernando's day was preferable to the equally fierce political religions of today. Also, it is only fair to consider that had the Requirement been used in good faith and observance of all the mitigating ordinances and instructions, much of its bite would have been removed. Reasonable analysis, however, comes hard as one follows the grinding threats to their hand-washing conclusion, and the fact remains that Pedrarias and his captains, who cynically ignored both the letter and the spirit of every ameliorating injunction, turned the whole Requirement into a savage joke.

The armada was organized, as Fernando remarked, "without consideration of the great expense and labor involved." More exactly, consideration went overboard as preparations progressed.

The original plan called for nine Crown ships, new or nearly new, four of them Portuguese lateen caravels, plus "two old naos" to be obtained on charter. Small craft—four pinnacle-built bergantines, two decked bergantines and eight fishing boats—could be either carried, or built in Darién after the armada got there. The number of recruits was set at eight hundred, including two hundred men on salary; they would receive free passage and free food during the voyage and for one month thereafter. The armada was to be provisioned, however, for sixteen months; the surplus, sold at reasonable prices, would insure adequate maintenance until the first crops were in.

Since the combined burden of the proposed transports was under a thousand *toneladas* and the order for food staples specified, among other things, 375,000 pounds of flour, 300,000 pounds of biscuit, and about 69,000 gallons of oil and wine—items which, with their casks, added up to some 1300 *toneladas*—it is not surprising that the number of ships had to be increased. In the end there were seventeen Crown ships and three or four chartered ones, plus some privately operated vessels, and another caravel was added in the Canaries.

"Heavy" armament, ordered from the royal factory in Málaga, was distinctly meager: four small cannon, two falconets, and thirty-five

single-shot hackbuts, all of bronze. (It was probably born in mind that there were supposed to be sixteen ex-Hojeda and -Nicuesa cannon in Darién, and eighty hackbuts.)³ For some reason the factory held up delivery, but with some difficulty and much delay the armada got two 800-pound falconets, six 280-pound field pieces, thirty-nine hackbuts. There were also four massive bronze mortars for grinding powder, and an adequate amount of lead, iron, powder and the ingredients for making it, and—considering that the colonists were expected to provide their own arms—an ample assortment of hand weapons and light armor, earmarked for the men (mostly professional soldiers) who went on salary.

The cost of these last was to be deducted from the men's pay. Since the list allowed, exclusive of replacements, a musket, a sword, a pike, a machete, a dagger, two bucklers, a casque, a breastplate, and a mail shirt for each man, it is to be hoped that purchase was optional. The pay of a 750-maravedí-a-month soldier who took a complete set would have been purely symbolic for a long time.

Tools and utensils were to be obtained mostly from Biscaya, where iron was cheap. This list led off with six hundred picks and four hundred hoes, continued through the essential implements of agriculture, carpentry, building, and mining, and wound up with galley equipment such as skillets, pots, and spits. Another section dealt with shipwrights' and calkers' supplies. There were other memoranda for special purchases, such as livestock.

All this demanded ready funds, and as usual the treasury was dry. The ship which had brought the procuradores had also carried a quinto shipment of 230 pounds in gold ingots from Hispaniola, but some of it was destined for the Church, the King was in urgent need of large sums, and Queen Juana's household had not been paid for the first third of the year. Fortunately, Fernando's ingenuity had been sharpened by a lifetime of making elusive ends meet. The Church had to be paid, and he himself could not do with less than four and a half million maravedíes, but the salaries of Juana's household could be carried over to the next due date in August—*quite* a usual arrangement, His Highness said; it was done at his own Court—the August installment could then be settled at the end of the year, and so on. This would leave about five million maravedíes for the armada. Per-

haps, the King wrote hopefully, "by deferred payments and your good diligence," this would be sufficient; if not, the balance could be paid out of future receipts.

No one with any experience of either governmental enterprise or armadas could have really believed that five million would cover the bulk of the cost. One has a cozy feeling of contemporaneity as one considers the optimistic budget, fiscal sleight of hand, and eventual overcost of that long-ago project.

The royal officials struggled manfully with their multifarious tasks, but it was uphill work. It was hard to find suitable ships, and for the Portuguese caravels it was necessary to send to Lisbon. (Vicente Yáñez Pinzón went for them, with a winning letter to the King of Portugal—who had forbidden the sale of ships to foreigners—reminding him that "on similar occasions, when you have some need, we command that it be provided here.") Owners asked more for charter than the market price of their vessels: 4000 maravedíes plus 100 for general average per tonelada, and insisted on eighty guaranteed passenger fares, at five ducats, for each caravel. Fonseca, after much arithmetic, advised that it was more economical to buy, hire crews, and take the risks than to charter; but by that time most of the fleet had been procured. There was also a shortage of capable pilots, or at least of capable pilots who were willing to accept the salary offered by the Casa.⁴ The bottleneck provided by the munitions works in Málaga was a trial; despite proddings and reproof the order had not yet been delivered in December.

There were, too, innumerable things to be purchased beyond those in the original lists. One order was for plants and seed: five hundred or so young fruit trees, some "of five transplantings"; sixteen bushels of three-month wheat; a quantity of hemp seed, linseed, and assorted vegetable seed. Another mixed list included six field tents, spare anchors and grappling irons, four hundred heavy sacks, fetters, conserves, and ointment. The inventory of pharmaceutical supplies filled many pages; another order was for fifty beds, complete as used in Seville, for the hospital. And in August, Bishop Quevedo presented a list of his own, under seventy-three headings, for over half a million maravedíes' worth of requirements for the church: bells, large and small; silver crosses and chalices; hangings and cloths of linen, silk

and "imitation satin"; vestments of all kinds; psalters, missals and antiphonals; and so on to the Bishop's ring, pectoral cross, and crosier.

By this time the armada had become something unique, and it was felt that its flags and banners should be in keeping. In addition to the linen flags for each ship, bearing the emblem of the cross of Jerusalem, there were forty-two silk damask ones of various colors. Those for the flagship must have satisfied even Pedrarias' love of display: the royal pennant was sixty-eight feet long, of crimson damask with white taffeta appliqué, painted with heraldic eagles and lions and lavishly gilded by Cristóbal de Morales, the artist who had decorated the audience hall of the Casa. The royal standard, the twenty-foot guidon, the *tajamar*, and the six gonfalons for the trumpets were of the same damask, also painted by Morales. Besides these, there were three magnificent religious banners of silk, gilded on both sides and painted by Pedro Ramírez. One bore the likeness of Santa María del Antigua, one that of "*el señor Santiago*" (St. James, patron of Castile), and the third was the banner of the Cross.

By late September it was apparent that it would be impossible to get the fleet off before winter set in. For one thing, Pedrarias was missing. He had left Court with the understanding that he would be in Seville by September twenty-seventh, and on October eighteenth, the King was obliged to send a courier to look for him, with an unwontedly curt letter: "For my service, be more diligent in the future than you have been up to now, and go with all haste to Seville . . . and inform me of the reason why you have delayed so long."

The Governor's nonchalance was undoubtedly irritating, but even had he been punctual the harried officials could not have dispatched the armada in October. Goods were not delivered, or were not delivered according to specification; with all the cargo space accounted for, VIPs turned up with transportation permits for ten, twenty, or (in Pedrarias' case) fifty toneladas of supplies and household effects; the recruits demanded to take personal baggage—something no one had foreseen—and space had to be found for fifteen hundred extra boxes.⁵ Many of the volunteers wanted their wives to go with them, and the King, who considered families out of place during the initial period of conquest but who approved of domesticated colonists, consented to allow one hundred men to take their wives and children on

the free-passage list. One man, a kettledrummer, took eight (presumably marriageable) daughters.

Even small problems were referred to Fernando, who gave patient attention to all of them—such things as the advisability of tortoise-shell armor (a suggestion that Fernando turned down, but which was to prove excellent in a later expedition),⁶ and what to do about the bergantines which the King wanted built in Spain and the officials thought should be built in Tierra Firme. (In the end two bergantines were taken complete and four in prefabricated sections to be assembled in Darién.) One question, as to whether a thousand hammocks left over from a shipment to Santo Domingo could be given to the armada, illustrates an interesting fact: hammocks were already being manufactured in Castile, as were cotton enaguas and loincloths, for sale to the natives of Hispaniola.

On one question submitted to him the King was firm: Enciso could not go to Darién ahead of the armada. The bachiller, who owned a half interest in one of the ships which had been chartered for Pedrarias' fleet, and had bought another nao for merchant service, was trying to get permission to leave at once on his own. Fernando said plainly that this was impossible because it would result in trouble with the colonists; the bachiller might go, if the officials deemed it expedient, but only if Alcalde Mayor Espinosa went also. Enciso preferred to drop the subject.

By autumn, however, the real difficulty was recruits—not the lack of them, but a pushing, insistent army of would-be colonists who clamored to enlist. Advertising had paid too well. In the beginning, when it seemed necessary to offset the evil reputation acquired by Urabá and Veragua, criers had published the riches of Tierra Firme in the city squares. Later, with the roster of the expedition already full, the propaganda snowballed of its own momentum, helped by some vigorous shoves from Enciso, Pedrarias, Colmenares, and (Oviedo says) the Bishop. Thus Seville had been invaded by thousands of surplus applicants, who besieged the Casa de Contratación and tried the patience of the municipal authorities. Fernando consented to admit two hundred more men to the free-food-and-passages list, and until December seems to have set no limit to the number who might go at their own expense.

A great many of the colonists-elect were hidalgos who, like Oviedo and Pedrarias himself, had expected to go with Gonzalvo de Córdoba to Italy in the stillborn expedition against the French. And, for these, one of the chief incentives for volunteering was a matter of clothes.

In that day magnificent clothes were more than a taste; they were a craving for which men and women of rank quite often beggared themselves. In Castile, as in other countries, the sartorial passion was checked by sumptuary laws, which were resented much as Prohibition might be in a community of toppers. But Córdoba, the Gran Capitán, loved splendor, and in the past the luxury of his semi-regal court in Naples had been famous all over Europe. ("On a day of no particular ceremony he wore a crimson cloak lined with sable which had cost him 2000 ducats.") In this congenial atmosphere, where sumptuary laws had no effect, everyone could indulge his love of brocades and velvets, of gold embroidery and scented gloves and shoes of colored leathers soft as silk; caballeros could, and did, have their chargers' housings made of satin lined with taffeta, appliquéd and gallooned with their devices. And, in happy anticipation, Córdoba's would-be followers had spent all their ready cash, and in many cases borrowed heavily, to provide themselves with gorgeous wardrobes—only to be left stranded with clothes and nothing else.

In this predicament the armada for Tierra Firme was an answer to prayer. Pedrarias was a long way from being another Gran Capitán, but he was sound on essentials: he had obtained a special dispensation in the matter of dress.

In July 1513 the sumptuary laws had been extended to Castilla del Oro, and although it was stated that settlers who possessed property in the colony worth more than a thousand pesos might have limited exemption ("provided there is only one border, and the fringed border be no wider than a thumb's breadth; and the said borders cannot be worn around the hem . . ."), the concession was no immediate help.⁷ But there was a rider to the decree which solved everything: The honorable people who went in the armada whose clothes were their only possessions, could wear what they had freely in the colony. Other edicts specifically exempted Pedrarias and Doña Isabel from any restrictions on dress and ornament. Lampas, *tercanel*, damask,

and gold-threaded brocade would be worn in the sweltering little hamlet in the Isthmian jungle.

The fleet lay in the river at Seville: sixteen Crown naos and caravels, one *burchón* (usually referred to as "the big boat"), and the chartered vessels. There were also four "unofficial" ships, owned by, or chartered to, merchants and other members of the expedition. The bergantines, all of which were carried on deck, were picked up later in San Lúcar. Accounts are sometimes confused by the curious paucity of names among the ships of the armada: two were called *Santiago*; two, *Sancti Spiritus*; two, *Santa María de la Victoria*, and no less than three were named *La Concepción*. Although the Casa was still struggling with an acute pilot shortage and transatlantic sailings were customarily suspended during the five winter months, loading was begun on November twentieth, in hope of an early January sailing.

At this eleventh hour, dispatches arrived from Santa María. It would seem that these included the reports taken by Ocampo and his fellow shipmaster, but at least some of them were of subsequent date—perhaps sent off by the ships which brought the Serrano-conducted reinforcements and the royal brevet for Balboa. Their effect on the King was such as to reduce Colmenares to helpless fury. Three years later he was still seething: "Vasco Núñez wrote to the King saying many wild things and lies and deceptions; and this he did in order that the King should make him governor of that land. And the King was pleased to give more credence to those iniquities and lies than to what the procuradores had told him, which was true; and thus the armada was organized in contrary fashion to what it had been before." Had he, Colmenares, been listened to, the misfortunes which followed would not have occurred.

Colmenares does not explain what the changes were, although it is clear that he made a nuisance of himself over them. Oviedo says that in so far as the armada was concerned, they consisted of limiting the number of independent volunteers to five hundred, when fifteen hundred were prepared to go. (Balboa, it will be remembered, had been emphatic about an expense-free development of the colony, and the uselessness of green recruits from Spain.) One may guess, however, that what really upset the procurador was the sudden benevo-

lence with which Balboa was regarded. Acting on the letters he had himself received from Santa María, he protested and petitioned in a flurry of angry energy, and got nowhere. The substance of his charges and requests was relayed to Pedrarias for investigation, but without particular interest, and at the same time His Highness commanded the Governor to show Vasco Núñez—now once more “Alcalde Mayor” and “Their Highnesses’ Captain”—every possible consideration and favor.

On January fifteenth the final review of the expedition was held in Seville, cheered with the enthusiasm of relief by the townspeople who had been obliged to quarter the expeditionaries for months. It must have been a brave sight, all pomp and color, as the flags, blessed and dedicated, passed in solemn procession before the ranked brilliance of “the most splendid people who ever left Spain.” It was, however, premature. What with the order to cut out self-financing volunteers and the persistent difficulty in securing pilots, the fleet did not leave until after the middle of February.

In the end the King had appealed personally to four eminent navigators to lend their services. These were Columbus’ partner in discovery, Vicente Yáñez Pinzón; Amerigo Vespucci’s nephew Juan Vespucci; another Italian named Antonio Romano; and Andrés de San Martín. The last three went, Vespucci as pilot of the flagship; Pinzón accepted, but, old and unwell, was obliged to resign before the armada left San Lúcar. Meanwhile, one of the *Santiago’s* was sent ahead to Gran Canaria, where Governor Sosa would deliver certain supplies and a company of his islanders. About February twentieth, the ships dropped downstream to San Lúcar de Barrameda.

On the morning of February 26, 1514, Carnival Sunday, the be-flagged fleet put out to sea. It was the climax of nine months of preparation, the visible pageant of adventure—and, distressingly, it fell flat. A violent storm came up when all but one caravel (whose pilot had smelled a gale and refused to budge) had dropped their harbor pilots. The flagship, already eighteen or twenty miles from port, turned back; the other ships came about as best they could and ran for the river mouth. Two of them were so damaged crossing the bar as to be no longer serviceable. For two days the miserable, seasick passengers were unable to land; on the third, when small boats could

be used, they made a wan descent on San Lúcar. There they stayed, bored, cross, and uncomfortable, for six weeks.

There was no free food until the voyage began, and in the course of an involuntarily rigorous Lent many of the men were reduced to "eating their capes," i.e., bartering clothes for meals. Several hundred of them went home in disgust, but Pedrarias, winking at regulations, took on an even greater number of substitutes, so that the strength of the armada was increased, according to Oviedo, to over two thousand.

At long last, five days before Easter, God gave good weather. On April eleventh, the armada again put out to sea, and set its course south for the Canaries. Counting recruits, officials, clergy, families, merchants, mariners, servants, and armada women (usually reckoned at one for every ten men), there must have been between twenty-eight hundred and three thousand voyagers. Fernando had reason to remark, as he did to Pedrarias, that it was "one of the great enterprises that there are in the world today."

XIX

ONCE away, the armada had fair sailing: eight days to La Gomera in the Canaries, twenty-five from Gomera to Dominica in the Antilles, a week from Dominica to Santa Marta. The voyage was prolonged, however, by a stopover of twenty days in Gomera.

A week was normally ample for all that had to be done in the Canaries, but Pedrarias had various causes for delay. An extra ship was chartered, which had to be overhauled and loaded. The flagship needed a new helm. *Santiago* had to be dispatched to Santo Domingo, from where she would proceed to Darién. Pedrarias had been strictly forbidden to touch at Hispaniola, or even to go near it unless the navigators should agree (in writing) that sailing conditions made that course necessary—in which case no communication might be had with the island colonists. Indeed, Colón, to whom the no-contact order had been transmitted, was instructed to punish violations by death. But the authorities of Hispaniola had been ordered to provide

both men and supplies for Castilla del Oro, and in view of the well-known difficulty of getting delivery from Colón, it had been decided that one armada vessel could call at Santo Domingo. *Santiago*, with Vázquez de Coronado as captain and Antón García as both master and pilot, sailed at least a week before the rest of the armada left Gomera.

The chief item which Governor Sosa had been told to have in readiness for the armada was a detachment of fifty of his acrobatic Guanches, "the most active and the best swimmers that can be obtained," each sketchily outfitted with a tabard and shield. The amphibious auxiliaries had evidently been suggested by tales of swamp-beset marches and the hazards of entradas by canoe. They certainly were not, as a modern historian states, "a precautionary measure in preparation for any contest with Vasco Núñez." Whatever may have been speculated about Balboa's possible attitude, he was not expected to challenge the expedition to mortal water combat. Captain Zorita, who had gone ahead to collect the swimmers,¹ seems to have had them waiting for Pedrarias at Gomera, but their subsequent role in Darién does not appear.

The armada cleared from Gomera on May ninth. The crossing of the Atlantic was so easy that the ships sailed within shouting distance of each other—so near that in mid-ocean a Portuguese lad, the butt of merciless teasing by his shipmates, actually jumped overboard believing he could swim to the next caravel. He was left astern, but the ship just behind scooped him up in a matter of minutes. Somewhere along the way a homebound caravel was sighted—a meeting as rare as that of cars on a one-way road, since the regular course from Hispaniola to Spain worked north to catch the westerly trades; the arm of coincidence appears almost too long for belief, but it would seem that in the caravel (or caravels) were Arbolancha and Balboa's reports of discovery.

However halcyon the weather, a long voyage on an overcrowded caravel whose decks were cluttered with gear, freight, potted plants, sections of boats, and a pungent assortment of livestock, was a trying experience. What it was like from a passenger's viewpoint is set forth by that literary bishop, Antonio de Guevara, who was obliged to do a good deal of Mediterranean travel. Guevara composed a little treatise

called *La vida de la galera* ("Life on Shipboard"), containing advice for voyagers and a reference list of "the privileges of the ship."² The latter included equal rights in bedbugs, lice, and fleas; the privileges of stinking water, to be drunk quickly while holding the nose with the left hand, and of rancid meat "hard as the devil, salt as fury, indigestible as stones and, in excess, harmful as rat poison." Some of the other privileges were bunks without bedding, sleeping in one's clothes, rats, the unveiled privy slung outboard in full view and, of course, seasickness.

Among other hardships the Bishop remarked the total impossibility of hiding any woman, "one's own or another's"; the man who took a girl along at his own expense was certain to find himself a public benefactor. Travelers were advised to provide themselves with some good books, since reading was a more commendable diversion than the only others available, succinctly described as "adulterizing and gambling." Guevara listed eleven games of chance which aboard ship were interrupted only for matins, vespers, meals, the alternative pastime, and sessions of prayer when the weather was bad, but—soured on every aspect of life at sea—complained that the cards were marked and the dice loaded.

(Theoretically, gambling was forbidden the expeditionaries on ship or in Castilla del Oro. Pedrarias, however, was himself an inveterate gambler who would play with anyone rather than forgo a game and who wagered staggering sums on an all-night session of chess. It may be surmised that the ban on gaming and betting, like other inconvenient ordinances, was honored in the breach once Spain was left behind.)

Dominica, where the armada arrived on June second, has been called the loveliest island in the world: an enchanting, jade-and-emerald Eden of mountain and forest, where the snakes have no venom and the scorpions refrain from stinging. In 1514, however, its Carib inhabitants were less innocuous than the smaller fauna, and ships limited themselves to quick calls for water. The usual anchorage, on the west side, was called El Aguada; Pedrarias, blithely ignoring the King's injunction against changing existing names as well as twenty years of history, assumed a discoverer's privilege and christened it Fonseca Bay. It was a fine place to spend a day or so, as long

as the Caribs kept their distance, for in addition to a clear, cool stream it had a rivulet of almost boiling water, perfect for washing travel-soiled clothing.³

The day after arrival at El Aguada was Sunday, and Mass was said on board. It was followed by a conference of officers and navigators to determine the future course. Pedrarias had always hankered to go by way of Hispaniola, saying that none of the pilots knew the direct route from the Antilles to Darién. If this were true, it is odd that Antón García, who indubitably did know it, having navigated the Hojeda caravel which went to the Isthmus in 1502, should have been assigned to *Santiago*. At all events, the assembled pilots told Pedrarias that the armada could very well go direct as instructed. The Governor decided to send one more ship via Santo Domingo, with letters for the King—presumably one of the privately operated vessels which were not subject to the same limitations as those of the armada proper. The rest of the fleet would proceed at once for Santa María.

When the order to embark was given, it was discovered that some of the men had disappeared. Captain Ayora and a company were told off to camp on the beach, sounding recall at intervals. The last adventurer to straggle in on Monday morning was a certain San Martín, who had been in Pedrarias' service for fourteen years. Ayora gave him a public tongue-lashing; the older man, humiliated and rather drunk, replied in picturesque terms to the effect that he would rather stay with the Caribs than continue in the armada. Ayora hurried to the flagship to report, and the Governor, in a towering rage, ordered his cousin, Morales, to land with a few halberdiers and string San Martín to the nearest tree.

The incident threw a notable chill on the expedition. Execution without trial, without the last rites of the Church, was unheard of even for crimes much more serious. If this were a sample of Pedrarias' methods with a criado of long standing, what were the other people to expect? No one dared to protest, but no one forgot. The Bishop, who might have intervened had he known in time (he was on another ship), could only send his chaplain to insist that the poor wretch be given a Christian burial. What Contador Márquez thought, remembering when he had been the protagonist of a like escapade in the next island, can only be guessed.

The armada left Dominica on June sixth. There was no sign of the Portuguese poachers in the Caribbean, whom Pedrarias had been ordered to punish in such fashion as would permanently discourage trespass. Sailing westward without incident, the armada sighted Santa Marta at sunup on June twelfth. It speaks well for the navigators that all the ships made the tricky entrance to the bay and were snug at anchor by ten in the morning. The fledgling colonists stared landward; this was their first port in Castilla del Oro; this towering country, behind the narrow strip of bright grass and squared-off fields that bordered the harbor, was the first presentation of nature's challenge to invasion. And on the shore, striding up and down "with many feathers, and war paint, and bows and quivers of arrows, very proud," were their first Indians, looking anything but reassuring.

After a conference on the flagship, Pedrarias ordered Ayora, with sixty men in three lifeboats, to approach the beach and read the Requirement to the parading natives.

In a very short time the Spaniards were to learn to reduce reading of the Requirement to a rapid gabble of Castilian, delivered either from a distance in the empty dark before a surprise attack, with the last word still hanging on the air when the assault was launched, or to captives already safe in chains. At Santa Marta the technique had not yet been perfected. Balancing with slightly unsteady dignity in their boats, the chosen interpreters followed the reading by a long explanation. The Indians stood to listen, but since the interpreters were Rodrigo de Colmenares and an Indian from the Isthmus, they understood about as much, Oviedo says, as an Arab hearing a Biscayan talk in Gascoigne. As the incomprehensible lecture continued, the natives, obeying an impulse with which countless much-tried audiences can sympathize, suddenly let fly their arrows.

Ayora first told his men to cover themselves with their shields and hold their fire while he sent to Pedrarias for instructions. Then, deciding that peace was impossible and retreat shameful, he ordered them to fire two rounds and rush the beach. The Indians—there were not more than a hundred of them—broke and ran, and the day was won. Pedrarias landed with several hundred more men, and sword in hand proceeded to take possession of the land. He knew the formula, for he had been required to study it in Seville from the records of

previous ceremonies, and he was thus able to carry off his maiden effort with the proper speeches, tree-hackings, and attestations, happily disregarding the fact that Santa Marta had been annexed, posted, and registered ever since 1501.

The next three days were active and profitable. They began with a combination prospecting and captive-hunting expedition, interrupted by a fight for possession of a hamlet. The skirmish was a minor affair, but an exhausting one. The Indians, who were at the top of a steep, bare hill, rolled boulders on the Spaniards, who were at the bottom, and the storming of the village involved climbing an abrupt slope while nimbly leaping out of the way of advancing rocks. Spanish guns, however, soon sent the defenders flying. Nine or ten women and one man were captured, and Oviedo's Negro slave brought him a "princess" he had found hiding in a thicket. Oviedo says that she was sixteen or seventeen years old, pretty, and as fair-skinned as a Castilian; she was quite naked, but held herself with such grave pride that she gave an impression of dignity, even of austerity. The other captives treated her with exaggerated deference. The *veedor* took her to Darién, but after a little she died—he thought of heart-break.

Soon after these bohíos were taken, Pedrarias again landed with about a thousand men; the forces joined and, occupying a deserted village of some twenty houses, settled down for a midday rest. At two o'clock the sentries gave the alarm: The Indians were coming, more than a thousand strong. Pedrarias at once became very much the general. He ranged his troops for battle: one of the portable field-pieces in the center, the musketeers and crossbowmen on each side, and at the extreme right and left two greyhounds which were reputed to be unsurpassed for coursing Indians or any other game. When the falconet was fired, the hounds were to be loosed and a concerted attack launched. The Indians advanced, muscular bodies gleaming with scarlet paint, garish feather headdresses tossing in the sun, conch shells blaring hoarse defiance. When they had come to within about five hundred feet, Pedrarias gave the signal. The trumpets shrilled an answer to the conches, the gun roared, the dogs were loosed, and the soldiers let fly with bolts and bullets.

The battle did not live up to the preliminaries. The cannon shot

went harmlessly wide; the dogs, ignoring the enemy, fell to fighting among themselves, and the Indians melted away into the forest without shooting a single arrow. That evening it was rumored that Pedro de Ledesma, who was master of one of the caravels, was very sick of a poisoned wound, but Oviedo went to see him and diagnosed the poisoning as alcoholic. Only one Spanish casualty is mentioned in Santa Marta—a man who was barely pricked by an arrow during the first skirmish, and who died raving two days later.

(It is hard to imagine Ledesma, "a fierce man, very big of body and loud of voice," succumbing to anything less than a poisoned ax. His experiences with Cosa in Urabá had been fairly arduous, but they were mild compared to his exploits on Columbus' fourth voyage. It was he who, at Belén, swam to shore through surf and rip tide, which the lifeboats could not face, and swam back again with news of the beleaguered garrison. A few months later, in the battle of Jamaica, he gave an even more spectacular demonstration of his capacity for survival. Literally carved to ribbons, his brain exposed by a saber cut, one arm all but severed, and the sole of his foot sliced off from toe to heel, he lay untended for thirty-six hours before he was taken to a damp hut where his wounds were treated, "for lack of turpentine," with boiling oil. The surgeon swore that he continued to find wounds every day for a week. Yet when the Indians crowded too close in almost superstitious wonder, he had only to lift his voice—"Now I'm going to get up!"—to send them scurrying pell-mell in terror.)

The last two days of the armada's stay were spent in scouring the neighborhood for valuables left in the abandoned villages, in one of which was found, and burned, an arsenal of bows, arrows, and poison in black balls which looked like a mixture of wax and pitch. Some years afterward Oviedo said that the loot in gold amounted to 7000 pesos, of which no account was ever rendered to the King; Colmenares declared that it came to 6000. Pedrarias and the officials admitted to less than a thousand, and even this they "neglected" to distribute. One would like to know, too, what happened to the "sap-phire" the veedor found, pale blue and nearly as big as a goose's egg, and, still more, what became of a superb tapestry, eighteen or nineteen feet long by about ten wide, woven in colored patterns and encrusted with emeralds and semiprecious stones, which was never

mentioned again but about whose ultimate possessor the veedor "like others who had an interest in it, had [his] suspicions."

A number of the colonists and officials were in favor of establishing a post at once in Santa Marta. A fine harbor, productive land, plenty of game, and, of course, the apparent abundance of gold were all arguments in its favor. So were the native inhabitants, who seemed to combine several useful characteristics: they were easily cowed, they were physically superior to most tribes, and as man-eaters and "abominable sodomites" they were potential candidates for legalized slavery. These last were proven, the first by human joints found cooking or curing in the bohíos, and the second by a gold statuary ornament, weighing about a quarter of a pound, which illustrated the matter with utmost clarity. Pedrarias, however, was opposed to any decrease in his forces before he had established himself in Darién, and on Thursday afternoon the men were all embarked.

The armada put out to sea in the small hours of Friday morning, June fifteenth. The flagship led, its guide light flaring in the elaborate wrought-iron lantern fashioned expressly for it by Master Antón de Cuenca. It was an unusual hour to take a large fleet out of harbor on an unfamiliar coastwise course, and it proved an unwise one. The wind came up strong, and some trick of the current carried the ships under the land. When daybreak came, they were perilously close to the Gaira beaches, south of Santa Marta. One can imagine the frantic maneuvering, the shouts and curses, as eighteen or twenty close-sailing vessels clawed off in desperate haste; the scene must have been like some complicated nautical gymkhana.

Safely out in clear water, the fleet, pushed by the equatorial current, was carried a hundred and fifty miles off its course. It missed Cartagena and Barú entirely, but managed to fetch Isla Fuerte, the flat salt island near the Sinú, where it lay over for two nights. All but one of the ships reached Darién roads on June twenty-sixth; the flagship, which had suffered some damage and had been obliged to unload cargo, arrived on the twenty-ninth.⁴

What the *muy lúcidos* new settlers thought as they looked at the promised land is not told. All they could see was mountains, jungle, a deserted beach, and perhaps the beginning of a trail that disappeared darkly along the river; the gobernación of Castilla del Oro presented

an unwelcoming and enigmatic face to its new masters. If, as was usual, the ships were dressed for arrival, the splendid banners and proud coats of arms must have seemed empty play-acting with no audience to give it meaning.

Pedrarias dispatched a messenger to Santa María del Antigua, to announce his state entry the following day. The courier found Vasco Núñez—until that instant Their Highnesses' Captain General—clad in an open-necked shirt, old cotton breeches and *alpargatas*, engaged in supervising the laying of a new roof. Stifling what surprise he may have experienced at this unexpected view of the man pictured as a swaggering usurper greedy for the glitter of rank, he delivered his message, no doubt with uneasy curiosity as to how it would be received. Balboa continued to provide surprises. He amiably replied that he would be happy to receive the new governor and that he would go to meet him with all due deference.

The vecinos, like involuntary hostesses caught in the midst of their housework by distinguished guests, were much exercised as to what to wear. Should they go to meet the Lord Governor in full armor, marching in military order? Vasco Núñez settled the question with his customary good sense: they would welcome Pedrarias cordially, without display, and unarmed.

It is impossible to think of the meeting of the old order and the new except in terms of theater.

The scene was played on a natural stage—the open ground just where the trail from the sea debouched from the woods, about a mile and a half from the settlement. It was a green set: green of grass in the clear level, lighter green of canebrakes along the small river, dark to indigo greens piled close in the forest backdrop, jumbled greens of every shade, from pale amber to deep tones heavy with blue and purple shadow, of the enclosing hills. And in the sun, brilliant against the somber jungle in their bright new clothes and shining mail, stood the two thousand men of the armada, carefully disposed by Pedrarias to best advantage, "very well accoutered and armed, and ranged in very good order, so that it was a thing that looked well in every part."

Well in front (downstage left) stood the Governor, Doña Isabel, and the Bishop. It is easy to picture them. Pedrarias would have made the most of the occasion to display the magnificence he loved. Full

harness would have been offensive and impractical; he probably wore part armor, perhaps discreetly covered by a rich doublet, or one of those deceptive garments called brigandines which, all velvet and luxury to the eye, were completely interlined with steel scales. A short cape with gallooned border, satin breeches slashed and puffed in the new fashion, ornate sword belt and velvet-covered scabbard, all proclaim his rank and special privilege. Beside him Doña Isabel is elegant in tight-bodied brocade cut to show a frank bosom; her gown glitters at seams and hem with gold-threaded embroidery and sweeps the ground to hide her decorated cordovan slippers. Her hair is caught in a spangled net, her hands are encased in embroidered gloves sewn with seed pearls; at her throat a heavy jewel catches the sun as it moves to the hurried breathing induced by heat, hard walking, and tight waistbands. The Bishop, robed for the "procession of honor," must have been equally impressive—a commanding figure in purple cassock, cambric surplice, gold-encrusted stole, and embroidered pallium.

Fortunately there was greater familiarity with the niceties of Court etiquette in the armada than in most expeditions. It must have required both tact and an uncommon knowledge of protocol to place all the *prominentes* and near *prominentes* to everyone's satisfaction: the officials, the clergy (chapter, seculars, and friars), the veedor, the alguacil, the assistants and lesser functionaries, the medical corps. The merchants, shipmasters, and pilots were probably in a group somewhat removed from the official one.

The female element in the armada, one fancies, also presented a problem in arrangement. Some were well to the fore: Márquez' wife, Doña Beatriz Girón; Doña Isabel's maids-in-waiting; Dr. Barreda's wife and those of the two armada surgeons. (The *medicos* were a domestic lot; the wife of Hojeda's Maestre Alonso had also come to join him with their young son, and even the "surgeon-tooth puller" was accompanied by his wife.) The families of *compañeros* and artisans were no doubt clustered together, the mothers hushing excited children and keeping a sharp eye on coquettish daughters. But these would not mix with the ladies of easy virtue, themselves divided in categories from haughty mistresses of *hidalgos* to unpretentious free-lancers. There were also the paid armada women, of uncertain status,

and some Castilian servants of the snobbish housekeeper and lady's-maid caste.

Well in display were the flags: the standard of Castile and Leon with its golden castles and purple lions, the eight-foot religious banners, the innumerable pennons with armorial bearings flaunting the pride of Castilian nobility. Add the horses in their brilliant trappings, the glare of armor, the plumes, the blazoned surcoats; add a mosaic riot of color from pale damasks to the scarlet stocking caps of sailors in the background; add the trumpeters and drummers, the pages, the Guanches of Canary, the Moorish slaves, the leashed dogs—and you have the picture composed that steamy morning in June against a backdrop of rain forest and lonely hills.

Then, swinging down the path from the settlement came the men of Santa María—five hundred leathery, hard-hewn veterans in worn and faded clothes, unarmed, free-striding, and chanting in unison, “Te Deum laudamus . . .”

One may wonder if Pedrarias' hatred of his predecessor was not born in those first moments: when Vasco Núñez stood tall and easy before him, his bronzed face schooled to seemly deference, his manner at once respectful and confident. The Governor was nearing seventy; he had a chronic kidney ailment; he had just covered three miles of rough trail in a *tenue* singularly unadapted to exertion in the tropics. Something had gone wrong with his studied pageant; the effect of the shabby, competent vecinos on his overmarshalled, overarmed forces was like that of skillful understatement on a paragraph of bombast. (King Fernando would have been amused; he had contrived just such deflating contrast when he was forced to give way to his son-in-law Felipe.) Unforgiving animosities can spring full-formed from less than this, but Pedrarias had a further motive for dislike. He had come with two thousand picked volunteers to win a special prize, “opening the way with steel” to the Other Sea, and his messenger must have told him that this fair-haired adventurer had already, as Martyr says, relieved him of both the effort and the glory.

Balboa knelt to the Bishop, bowed low to the Governor and Doña Isabel, and received from his successor's hand the *cédula* of credentials with its dangling seal. Unrolling the document, he skimmed through it, touched it to his lips and head, and launched into a speech

of welcome. After the Governor's reply, the presentation of notables, general introductions and interchange of greetings, all marked by the greatest urbanity, the ranks formed to march to Santa María.

Considering that a royal governor was taking possession of his mandate and a prelate of his see, the procession must have had a ceremonial quality. Preceded by a tall silver crucifix, the Bishop walked mitered, his ringed right hand free to bless and in his left the beautifully wrought silver crosier; next, after the trumpet-and-drum corps, the gubernatorial guard, and another cross, came the Governor with Doña Isabel, her left hand resting elegantly on his lifted right. Balboa may have walked on Doña Isabel's other side. And behind them streamed, in dwindling rank, the officials, captains, caballeros and vecinos, down to the last twice-exiled Algerian slave.

An hour or so later they were all crowded in the plaza of Santa María del Antigua. The gobernación of Castilla del Oro had begun.

XX

ON the morning after his arrival in Santa María, Pedrarias summoned Balboa to a private conference. He needed information about his gobernación: the kind of detailed, up-to-the-minute information that could be obtained only from his predecessor, and in good will. The interview afforded Oviedo—the only other person present—a good deal of sardonic amusement, for the Governor, who was notoriously “very arrogant and bad-tempered,” whose haughty exclusiveness was such that he admitted no subordinate to sit at his table, now displayed a positively saccharin cordiality.

Pedrarias dilated on the King's latest commands as to the favor and consideration to be accorded Vasco Núñez, and “with many sweet words” on his own desire to carry out the instructions in the most generous manner. He showed a flattering appreciation of Balboa's accomplishments, and a still more flattering deference for his opinions, declaring that “he intended to take his advice about everything.” It was the best butter, and might have softened a warier man

than his listener. Balboa, always vulnerable to friendly advances, was completely won over. He expressed his respectful gratitude to the King, placed himself unreservedly at the Governor's service, and promised that he would put the desired information in writing so that it could be kept for record and reference.

The following day, Sunday, Balboa delivered a lengthy memorandum which embodied everything he had learned in three and a half years in Tierra Firme. Needless to say, the document vanished, and the copy which the King requested does not appear to have been sent; it testified too clearly to its author's merits. But from Oviedo we know that Balboa kept his promise in full measure. He described the country and its inhabitants, the explorations made and the data acquired on unvisited regions, the location of mining ground both proven and reported, and appended a number of helpful hints as to future action. "And in everything," Oviedo notes, "he spoke the truth." Even Pedrarias had to accept the report without cavil; four hundred and fifty old settlers, interrogated singly, in groups, and en masse, confirmed it to the letter.

Thus briefed, the Governor felt that he could dispense with unnatural amenity and, for that matter, with Vasco Núñez. On Monday Balboa's residencia was proclaimed, which would immobilize him for anything up to two months and, with a little contrivance, for much longer. At the same time plans were laid for no less than five expeditions, to be carried out without delay and, of course, without Balboa.

There were good reasons as well as bad for this haste. Santa María could not support three thousand people; it could barely contain them, despite the unexpectedly hearty hospitality of the old residents. Moreover, each colonist had been promised land, either a *peonía* or a *caballería*. A *peonía*, as defined in a decree of August 1513, consisted of roughly 180 acres of land for grain, fruit, and vegetables, enough grazing land to support 155 assorted cows, mares, sows, sheep, and goats, and a town lot measuring about 42 x 96 feet. A *caballería* was equivalent to five *peonía* farms and four *peonía* lots.¹ Pedrarias was to have two *caballerías*, so was the church, and so, *in absentia*, was Fonseca; the pre-armada colonists were to be specially favored. And a certain amount of good land had to be left for exploitation by the Crown, since the sovereigns were, after all, techni-

cally the proprietors of the whole territory. It is evident that this program, as of July 1514, called for something like 4000 square miles of land suitable for agriculture and stock raising. This, in turn, meant more settlements. Thus the expeditions were charged with the task of establishing permanent posts, choosing the sites with due attention to mines as well as cultivatable environs.

At the same time, the entradas were expected to provide quick returns in treasure and Indians. The distinguished but impoverished new settlers had not been lured to perilous frontiers by the thought of developing a half section of virgin ground in the sweat of their brows. Mines were future riches; meanwhile, they wanted loot and slaves, in quantity and at once. These, then, became the expeditionaries' chief aims, for which they were to wreck the whole plan of colonization.

There was yet another reason for Pedrarias' impatience—one which to him was compelling. He had been cheated of the discovery of the Other Sea, and he was determined to wrest from Balboa as much as he could of the prestige and profit of the exploit. He therefore gave pride of place to an expedition designed to blanket Balboa's explorations in the Isthmus and to found settlements in Pocorosa, Tubanamá, and the Pacific coast. "To tell the truth," says Oviedo, "the purpose of this was . . . to deny to Vasco Núñez the effect of whatever grace might be granted to him, and to permit Pedrarias to oppose it, arguing that by his industry [the other coast] had been colonized, whereas Vasco Núñez had only seen it." This expedition, composed of four hundred and forty men and including three royal captains and numerous auxiliary captains, was entrusted to Pedrarias' lieutenant, Juan de Ayora. It was dispatched at the end of July or in the first days of August.²

The other projected entradas were: to Santa Marta—two hundred and fifty men under Pedro de Fonseca; to Dabaibe—a force under Feliciano de Silva; to Cenú—four hundred (?) men under the Governor's young kinsman and namesake, known as Pedrarias the Nephew or Pedrarias Junior, with Enciso as second-in-command; to the Río de los Anades (Corobari)—sixty men under Luis Carrillo, whose recommendation for the command was that he was Lope de Conchillos' brother-in-law. Only the last two materialized. The others grounded

on an unimaginable obstacle: when the time came to organize them, there were not enough able and willing armada men left to man so much as a scouting party. In early August, Santa María was struck by plague.

The week or so before the epidemic started was, however, so satisfactory (except to Balboa) that the reports sent with the first home-bound detachment of armada ships, just after August first, made cheerful reading. There had been some sickness, and the Governor, only a few days after arrival, had suffered an attack of his chronic ailment severe enough to oblige him to delegate most of his duties to the Bishop, but nearly everyone was well again. The former officers of the settlement had handed over their accounts and a balance due on royalties of over 1400 pesos of gold. Ayora had just left, and Pedrarias the Nephew was almost ready to start; two ships had been sent to Jamaica for provisions. Oviedo and Quevedo had been rather irritating—the first because of his insistence that captains of expeditions might not distribute loot without submitting it to him for prior check and registry, the second because he had already aligned himself with Balboa—but the rifts were not yet worth referring to the King.

Diplomatic relations had been established with Careta and Ponca, who with a nice sense of protocol sent representatives to greet Pedrarias. The juras were entertained lavishly, expressed their pleasure and admiration with ambassadorial tact, and after three days went back to tell what they had found. Pedrarias, who had spared no pains to impress them, was sure that their accounts would be followed by advances from other chiefs. He underrated the envoys' intelligence. Considering that what they had found behind the hospitality and display were two thousand-odd new colonists in search of a colony, their intentions plain in the bustling preparations for expeditions in all directions, it is not surprising that gestures of welcome immediately ceased.

At the end of July, *Santiago* came in from Santo Domingo. She had made a record voyage for a ship which had to pass through official hands in Hispaniola; on the other hand, she came alone, with comparatively little of all that had been allocated to Castilla del Oro from the island. The King had ordered the authorities in Santo Domingo to provide the following items: a hundred and twenty colo-

nists; fifty native miners—most of them from those held by the Crown, by Colón and his wife, and by other functionaries; ten Indians previously taken from Darién, as interpreters; a hundred pack mares with their gear, “so that the Indians may be spared burdens”; twelve riding mares, saddled and bridled, and a stallion; four hundred Yáquimo-made shirts and seven hundred *bateas* (wooden pans for washing gold), and, by special request to the Franciscan provincial, an Indian friar, a native of Darién, to help in the missions. The saddle mares and stallion, the shirts and bateas had been Pasamonte’s responsibility, and were duly delivered to Coronado. The other things should have been provided by Colón, together with vessels to carry them, “without excuse or delay or consulting me further on the matter.” But despite a strong supporting *cédula* to the royal officials (“I command that you see to all this with the liveliest attention and great diligence . . . so that it shall not happen as in the past, for you know what happened because of the poor help that was given to those who went with Nicuesa and Hojeda . . .”) there is no evidence that the order was carried out.

If *Santiago* could not bring all the recruits and Indians and pack animals, she did deliver fourteen unscheduled additions to the colony: the survivors of a party that had sailed for Darién from Hispaniola over a year before and had been cast away on the shore of Veragua. They had been picked up far out at sea as, too weak to manage the boat they had put together from bits of wreckage—a remarkable craft which served them for ten months—they drifted in aimless extremity. When *Santiago* found them, they had just cast lots to determine which of them should die to feed the others, and were awaiting nightfall for an action they could not face by daylight. (The prospective provender, one Alvaro de Aguilar, became one of Oviedo’s assistants.) Once in Darién, they must have wondered how permanent their salvation would be, for the plague began almost as soon as they arrived.

The pestilence was diagnosed, evidently by the eminent Dr. Barreda and his colleagues, as *modorra*. As applied to disease, *modorra* now means an encephalitic affliction confined to sheep; in the sixteenth century it meant, in Spain, an epidemic infection of man. Rodrigo de Molina, who studied it and published his findings in 1554, concluded that it was practically indistinguishable from Levantine plague, but

his clinical description suggests that the outbreaks he observed were a mixture of typhus (still little known in Western Europe) and bubonic plague. It is impossible to say whether the *modorra* of Darién was the same; its symptoms were those Molina describes, but it presents too many puzzling and contradictory features to allow positive identification.³

Whatever the epidemic was, it dealt hardly with the congested settlement. There was no escaping the horror, because there was no privacy. Men in delirium vomiting blood, men in stupor which passed into death, unclean bodies in fouled silks cluttered the streets. Yet *modorra* was not the only killer. The most dreadful part of the contemporary accounts is the repeated statement that death came as much from hunger as from infection, although the storehouse was stocked with provisions. "The officials wanted to make a profit on the Crown goods," Oviedo writes, "and since they themselves did not lack for food, they had no pity on the others."

At the beginning of August, *after* the Ayora expedition had been victualled, there were nearly 158 tons of flour on hand: enough to give every man, woman, and child of the armada then in Santa María a pound of flour a day for five months; of three ships which brought supplies from Jamaica for the Crown account (96,000 bushels of cassava, 2500 bushels of corn, 326 sides of pork, and 70 hogs), two arrived in October. But the free-rationing period was over, the majority of the new settlers had nothing with which to purchase food, and after a little the old residents refused to deplete further their private stocks in the interests of hospitality. "Robes of velvet and even of brocade were traded for a morsel of bread . . . a hundred noblemen died carrying firewood from the country to exchange for bread," says Casas, who drives home the description with a terrible anecdote of a caballero who, splendidly attired, staggered through the town crying, "Bread, give me bread!" to fall dead "in the sight of all."

There is no doubt but that the stories were basically true. Puente himself, some time afterwards, said that "deprived of food, many people wasted away . . . and passed from this present life." He put all the blame on Tavira, for whom he was gunning when he wrote, but there is no indication that he raised objections at the time. On the contrary, he was exigent about payments. As the senior official in the

colony, he shares with Pedrarias a grim responsibility for what was, in effect, mass murder—which did not prevent him from pointing with pride to the fact that at the end of March 1515, despite loss from spoilage, there was still flour left over from the original supply.

By December, when the plague had run itself out and the food shortage was eased, the roster of the distinguished colonists who had come with the armada had been cut to less than half. More than seven hundred had died. Hundreds more, ravaged by malaria, tropical ulcers, and dysentery, disheartened by privation and unfamiliar discomforts, and resentful at finding that gold was not the easy-come, ubiquitous product they had been led to expect, had cut their losses and left for other colonies or for Spain. Uncounted others remained in the colony only because they had neither cash nor credit with which to settle their debts and get passage elsewhere. Even the members of the official family who had, perhaps regrettably, been spared, were aching for excuses to win releases and depart. One can hardly blame them, especially Puente and Pedrarias; the Treasurer had suffered three bouts of fever, one so serious that he was given the last sacraments, and the Governor's illness, intermittently acute for six months, had left him with a crippled arm.

Five months had been enough to destroy the bright pattern of colonization of which the armada had been the symbol and hope. And whatever Pedrarias and his colleagues claimed in extenuation, *modorra* and its attendant ills were not the true reason for the disintegration; there were at least twelve or thirteen hundred men left in the colony at the end of 1514, and King Fernando's program could have been put in operation comfortably with a thousand. Two other factors—aside from the emotions which ever formed and fed events in *Castilla del Oro*—had much graver and more far-reaching effects. These were the *residencia* of Vasco Núñez, with all it entailed in bitterness and lost opportunity, and the conduct of Juan de Ayora, who in a few weeks wiped out Balboa's groundwork of conciliatory conquest. Later on we shall see how Ayora's idiot cruelty worked; in 1514 the facts were only half known and the resultant vicious spiral of retaliation and counterreprisal had not begun.

The immediate effects of the *residencia*, on the other hand, were known to everyone. Balboa was to be reduced to penury and impo-

tence, "his lands taken for the Crown, his money paid to whoever asked for it," and his talents wasted lest in serving the colony he achieve new triumphs. To Vasco Núñez and his adherents, notably Bishop Quevedo, this was monstrous injustice. Conversely, Espinosa acquitted Balboa on criminal counts, refusing to keep him in prison, and this infuriated the Enciso-Colmenares-Corral group, whose hearts had been set on a heavy sentence, preferably death. Pedrarias was angered not only because Balboa was at large, but because the Bishop and the alcalde mayor forced him to hand over a "secret" inquiry into his predecessor's alleged crimes, which he had conducted in defiance of his orders to abstain from matters pertaining to the judiciary and which, since it consisted solely of statements by Balboa's enemies, Espinosa declared invalid.

The criminal charges against Balboa were based principally on his putative responsibility for the expulsion of Nicuesa and of Enciso. Espinosa's decision was that in the Nicuesa affair everyone had been equally involved, and that whereas they might be considered to some degree blameworthy, "since they summoned him, even though they had some cause to resist him," it was all water under the bridge by now, and in his opinion best forgotten. There was no question of usurpation or revolt. By the same token, the judge declared, almost everyone had taken part in "upsetting Enciso"—a happy phrase—Balboa no more than the others. He added that it would be folly, as well as impractical, to punish every baquiano in Darién, if only because they were now the sole hope of the colony.

The most important suits for damages against Balboa were those brought by Enciso and by the onetime officers of the settlement who had revolted in 1512, with Enciso well out in front.

The bachiller was still pressing his demand for the gold taken from Cemaco, and had whipped up a supplementary one for 900 pesos on learning about the entradas made to Careta and Ponca after he left Santa María three and a half years before. He founded his original claim on the premise (unsubstantiated by fact) that he had not been a partner in Hojeda's enterprise, but an armador—or rather, *the* armador, entitled as such to the two-thirds part of the proceeds commonly assigned to a capitalist who entirely financed and equipped an undertaking. The basis for the claim relating to Careta and Ponca

is more obscure. Enciso spoke of the "*setenas y cuatro*." Setenas were damages equal to seven times the original sum in dispute; the cuatro (four) presumably referred to the four lots in the distributable loot which would have pertained to Hojeda, and which Enciso had tried to arrogate to himself. His thesis seems to have been that although he was no longer in Tierra Firme when the entradas took place, he was to be considered commander, entitled to the same rights enjoyed by Hojeda, up to the time Colón named Balboa acting captain.

Espinosa was not prepossessed with the bachiller, whose general attitude is nicely illustrated in his own words: "when Pedrarias and I went with an armada to Darién . . ." and whose efforts to circumvent the decisions of the court were naturally irritating. Furthermore, Espinosa considered that Enciso's demands were both unjustified and impossible of execution. He ruled against them, and when the case was appealed to Spain, referred the question of Enciso's status vis-à-vis Hojeda to the Royal Council with an adverse rider. There was not a thousand pesos to be found in all Santa María, the alcalde said; if the bachillér were to be awarded two thirds of the booty, "it would be better to give him the place, nor would that be enough, even if the vecinos were to be given him as slaves."

Except for a negligible complaint from Father Sánchez—that he had not been paid since enlisting with Nicuesa, and that Balboa had refused to let him leave the colony on the pretext that his ministry was needed, but really out of spite—the only other claims and charges of which we have definite information were preferred by Corral and his friends. They said that Balboa had taken naborias from them to give to their successors in municipal posts, on grounds that the Indians in question had been held as a perquisite of office, and they demanded restitution, plus half a peso a day for each naboria, reckoned from the time of transfer—a very pretty profit. The decision in these cases is not recorded, but despite the Bishop's assertion that Balboa's gold was made over to anyone who asked for it, one may guess that it did not satisfy the claimants. Corral's subsequent virulence, when he accused Espinosa of taking bribes "to acquit Vasco Núñez of the most singular crimes ever seen in a man of his condition," and that of Colmenares when he insisted that because Balboa "deserved death a thousand times" a fresh residencia should be

ordered under a judge chosen by Pedrarias, have the ring of frustration.

On one point, however, Balboa and his enemies shared a common aim. In the latter part of November the anti-Balboa clique urged the Governor to send him in irons to Castile, where, they fancied, they could more readily attain their ends. And Balboa himself asked to be sent, in irons if need be, because he thought that he would be vindicated once and for all if he could only talk to the King. It was Bishop Quevedo who blocked the plan. He must have believed that in Spain the wolves would get his politically naïve protégé, and he may have been right. At all events, he told the Governor that if Balboa presented himself to Fernando, he would certainly create so favorable an impression that he would be heaped with honors—including, perhaps, command in Castilla del Oro. This was enough for Pedrarias. Balboa was ordered to remain in the colony.

Up to this point Pedrarias had played a double game: on one level, a helping hand to Balboa's foes and the secret inquiry; on the surface, a show of appreciation and almost of regard. He occasionally consulted Balboa, and spoke of entrusting to him the expedition to Dabaibe; he wrote the King that the instructions to favor Balboa were being followed, and that the reason for keeping him in Santa María was that the colony could not spare a person so valuable.⁴ And in a peculiar, Pedrarian way, he may have been sincere. Behind his arrogant, authoritarian façade the Governor was essentially a weak man; it is the key to most of his behavior. His self-confidence was not a quality but an assumption, and thus both overdone and vulnerable. His sympathies were never with Balboa, but for a time his hopes may well have been, forced there by the threat of failure that hung over Castilla del Oro.

In one day the Governor's attitude changed to an open animosity which gradually became obsessive. The date was December 1, 1514, when letters arrived from King Fernando which had been dictated after news of the discovery of the Other Sea reached Spain.

When Fernando wrote on August nineteenth, he had seen neither Arbolancha nor the original reports addressed to him by Balboa; the royal agent, who had arrived early in the month in bad health, had not yet been able to undertake the journey to Court in Valladolid.

But Pasamonte had forwarded the accounts he had received from Balboa with a covering letter "beseeching" that Vasco Núñez be rewarded, and these had been rushed to the King by the royal officials. They were quite enough to send Balboa's stock soaring. In a fever of satisfaction Fernando sent off cédulas to Balboa, Pedrarias, and the vecinos of Darién, couched in terms which stung the Governor past bearing. It was perfectly clear that His Highness, while postponing specific commitments until after he had talked with Arbolancha, intended to do something exceptional for the discoverer. His letter to Balboa was an accolade and a promise:

Because Arbolancha has not yet arrived and I am awaiting his coming to take measures in everything to do with those regions and in what concerns you, this will be only to tell you how greatly I was rejoiced to read your letters and to learn of the things you discovered in those regions of *Tierra Nueva de la Mar del Sur* and the Gulf of San Miguel, for which I give Our Lord much thanks, in the hope that it will all be to His service. I am grateful to you, and I deeply appreciate your labor and achievement in this as that of a most true and loyal servitor. And I also hold in service all those who went with you on that journey, and the hardships and hunger and suffering which you and they endured. And since it has been so great a service to God and to us, and to the welfare and resources of these realms, you must expect that you and they will be well rewarded and remunerated, and that I will always keep in mind your services and theirs, to the end that you may receive favors. As regards yourself, I will so dispose that you be honored and your services recompensed, for in truth I well comprehend that in everything that you have undertaken you have done very well.

I am pleased with the way you behaved to the chiefs on that march, with kindness and forbearance, leaving them well disposed, because that good treatment and reasonableness and leaving of them at peace will cause [others] to do what is expedient in our service, there and everywhere else.

When your letters came, Pedrarias had already left . . . I am writing to him to look to your affairs with care and to favor you as a person whom I greatly desire to gratify and who has greatly served me, and I am sure that he will do so. And you, for my sake, until such time as I send orders as to what you are to do in my service—which will be soon, God willing—do you help him and counsel him

in what he should do, with that good will and urbanity that you have shown till now and that I expect of you; and even if he does not ask you about everything, be alert yourself to advise and counsel him in what you see is expedient for him to do.

A less touchy man than Pedrarias might have taken a cold view of this last paragraph. Bits of the *cédula* directed to the old settlers were also unpalatable, notably that which referred to "what you say about Vasco Núñez' great services and the ability he has to serve in those parts better than anyone else." And the implications were driven home in a very long *cédula* addressed to the Governor, exuding enthusiasm and references to Vasco Núñez at every turn of paragraph: Vasco Núñez thinks there should be settlements in Tubanamá and at the Pacific; Pedrarias should see to it. Vasco Núñez says that it would be necessary to build ships at the South Sea for exploration; Pedrarias must have this done immediately. Vasco Núñez writes that provisions are needed; Pedrarias must look after this with great care. Vasco Núñez had written that he was arranging further exploration (i.e., Garabito to the Gulf of San Miguel); Pedrarias must send information on this. Vasco Núñez has sent data and suggestions, excerpts of which are being forwarded; Pedrarias should study them and profit by them. Vasco Núñez' treatment of the Indians has been in the highest degree commendable; Pedrarias must emulate it and see that his troops do the same. Vasco Núñez, a magnificent servitor who has done well in everything he has undertaken and will undoubtedly do equally well in the future, will be suitably rewarded; meanwhile, "I command and charge you to treat him very well and favor him in all things that concern him."

Most unkindest cut, Pedrarias was enjoined to consult with Balboa on all plans and decisions, "because by reason of his great experience in things there and of the will he has to serve us, he cannot fail to hit the mark in everything; and thus you will benefit yourself and do me great pleasure and service." No wonder Pedrarias seethed. It was bad enough to be told in so many different ways that Balboa was the better man; it was intolerable to be put in the position of an inexperienced pupil, hand-led by a tactful tutor.

There is one significant feature about Fernando's letters. He said nothing whatever about gold. The only specific aspect of the expedition

of discovery on which he remarked was the treatment of the Indians. On this, however, he wrote at length; fully a third of his *cédula* to the Governor was taken up with approving comments on Balboa's methods and recommendations for similar ones on the part of Pedrarias. His Highness was unhappily aware that such instructions could not be repeated too often.

I would have you see to it, with the greatest care, that the Indians be attracted to our service by good and peaceful means; and that you forgo all rigor and force and the harm that the troops are in the habit of doing, because it would be detrimental to their conversion and cause them to be always hostile . . . and would cause them to have a bad opinion of Christians and never desire to be converted. And since, as you know, the troops are more apt to take such advantage as they want and can get than to conserve the things which are to Our Lord's service and ours, as are these [kindly methods], and are capable of creating, for small profit, great turbulence from which much that is harmful and inexpedient can result, you must take special care to punish with extreme severity any person who might dare some infringement with regard to the above, and so sentence them that they be chastised and others warned, and in such manner that the Indians know that it was imposed for that reason.

Fernando reminded the Governor that severe controls would be specially necessary for the leaders of *entradas*, and for those recruits who had seen service in Italy, "who as you know are accustomed to the worst vices and habits."

Poor Fernando. He ploughed the sea, but one can echo Casas, that embattled defender of the Indians and critic of the conquest, when he says: "It is a pleasure to see how the Catholic King remained free of the sins that were committed to the perdition of these peoples."

XXI

AT the end of 1514, when Castilla del Oro had been an operating *gobernación* for six months, Pedrarias found himself in an embarrass-

ing position. He had to report to the King, and he had nothing to say—nothing, that is, which was remotely consonant with either his resources or his instructions, and which did not suggest painful comparison with his predecessor. In October and November his letters had rather stressed the sickness and trouble in Santa María. But that was before receiving the royal cédula on December first, which in addition to everything else had carried a velvet reminder that of those to whom much is given, much is expected. "You will have arrived at the best time in the world," Fernando had said, "because what with Vasco Núñez having begun to discover what he did, and the information that you can get from him there, you will be able to carry out very well everything that should be done."

Thus on December twenty-eighth Pedrarias composed a report remarkable chiefly for its omissions. A good deal of thought must have gone into this document, which gives the general effect of a retouched portrait seen through a pinkish veil, but it was a pathetic showing for a proud commander come in pomp and force to colonize a realm. The young fruit trees were doing well; the people had played at *cañas* on Christmas day, all nicely dressed but without undue luxury; there was plenty of wild cassia growing round about, and some corals (?) had been found in the river; a butcher, a fishmonger, and a baker had opened for business, dry goods were sold in the plaza, and the price of meat had come down "every day" to only half a peso the *arrelde*. (It may be mentioned that this low price was about six times that current in Spain, and that a chicken in Santa María was worth three gold pesos—the equivalent of a corporal's monthly pay.)

The rest of the report was on much the same lines—making the most of the little that had been done in the settlement (and also of some things, like the convent and the hospital, which had been done before the armada arrived), and indicating that after initial difficulties bravely borne, "everything was turning out well." The budding conflict with Bishop Quevedo did not appear; relations between them were described as marked by great politeness on both sides—though rather more, it was implied, on the side of Pedrarias. True, there were some less cheering items. The Governor touched on the impossibility of supplying priests to the new settlements, because half of those who had come in the armada were dead; on the unfortunate delay in building

caravels, unavoidable because the shipwrights were dead too; on the pressing need for road repair and drainage, neglected because no one wanted to work as a day laborer and the paid recruits would rather forfeit their 9000-maravedí annual salary (and who can blame them?) than occupy themselves with making trails and digging ditches. But these things would be remedied. For the moment there was nothing with which to pay any but essential expenses (among which the stipends of the remaining clergy were not included), but the future was filled with promise. The land was the best in the world for cattle, and so productive that it would be unnecessary to import foodstuffs; already everyone was planting, and meanwhile there were plenty of provisions on hand; new mines would certainly be discovered, though perhaps not such rich ones as had been hoped.

It would be interesting to know the comments of Fernando and the officials of the Casa when they read this confection. It gave a slippery impression even when taken alone; when compared with other accounts from Castilla del Oro and the tales of returned colonists—or, for that matter, with previous letters from the Governor—it must have seemed very odd indeed. The picture of self-sufficient plenty, for instance, dissolved like frosting before tales of starvation, of crops lost because the colonists were too miserable to care for their choked fields and their naborias too adept at running away, of inflation and poverty and wholesale departures. And the presentation of a gallantly progressive settlement where the principal problem was now public works faded to the stuff of dreams when exposed to otherwise unanimous descriptions of Santa María as a wretched, sweltering, pestilential hole surrounded by stinking swamps and infested with “toads and other venomous animals,” in whose streets the famished living stumbled over the unburied dead.

A great deal had been learned, too, about subjects of which the Governor fought shy, which were those that really mattered: relations with the natives, conduct and progress of expeditions in the field, and the state of the exchequer.

Pedrarias excused his failure to submit a financial statement on the grounds of his illness. It is pretty evident that the finances themselves were anything but healthy. The administration had scraped through by taking unto itself the royalties on pre-armada profits handed over

in July, the gold from Santa Marta (conveniently undistributed "because of more urgent occupations"), the two-thirds share of the product of the Cenú expedition due to the King as sole armador, and the receipts for freights and charters payable to the Crown on the armada account. But the fact remained that, as of December 31, 1514, it was over 16,000 pesos in debt.

An outline account would have looked something like Page 237 (all items reckoned in gold pesos, tomines, and granos; see Appendix II).

The reckoning is not, of course, exact. Apart from the fact that some items are not available (e.g., the "very great" cost of the expedition to Cenú), the amounts entered by the Treasurer were sometimes in worked gold averaging eighteen or nineteen carats, sometimes in raw gold which might run as high as twenty-two carats, sometimes in maravedíes, which were usually, but not always, converted at a slight premium. Also, it had been impossible to get Tavira to turn in the receipts from sale of supplies, or even to state what they were, although this gap in the over-all picture did not, strictly speaking, affect the final result of the account, since the product belonged directly to the royal hacienda.

As for the human deficit, no precise figures are recorded. On the basis of eyewitness estimates (Oviedo: fifteen or twenty deaths a day; Andagoya: seven hundred deaths in a single month; Quevedo: more than half the armada dead), with some allowance for exaggeration, the mortality plus the departures had left between eleven and thirteen hundred people in the colony. The Bishop, indeed, indicates a much lower figure, but like Casas he was never one to let slavish statistics spoil a desired effect. Balboa, who is usually accurate, said in May of 1515 that there were a thousand men in Darién.

Finally, the six months showed a total loss in so far as peaceful dominion and colonization were concerned. The full returns were in only on the expedition of Pedrarias the Nephew and Enciso, which made a dragged return in November, but enough had been heard from the other entradas (save for the detachments at the Pacific coast) to know them failures. The fault lay squarely with the Spaniards.

The colonists did not want peace but slaves. And since all but actively rebellious Indians were, in theory, free, it had already become well-nigh impossible for the best-intentioned natives to keep an

Receipts:

Royalties, Pedrarias administration

(a) on "good" wrought gold	583-4-5	
(b) on slaves	123-0-0	706-4-5

Royalties, Balboa administration

(a) on "good" wrought gold	854-0-6	
(b) on mined gold	453-5-9	
(c) on guanín	75-0-0 ^a	1,382-6-3
Crown profits from the Cenú expedition (gold)		277-0-0
Undistributed Santa Marta gold		792-0-0
Freights, charters, fares		1,223-0-0
Total receipts		4,381-2-8

Debits:

Salaries due, exclusive of advances

to the Governor, 14½ months	982-6-2	
to the officials, alcalde, and veedor . .	1,801-0-0	
to the Bishop, 10 months	1,666-5-0	
to the Crown for advances to above . .	1,774-3-0	
to the clergy, average 1 year	1,343-5-0	
all other salaries and wages, av. 1 year	6,231-3-1	13,799-6-3
Freights, etc., less some deductible costs ^b		1,800-0-0
Extraordinary expenses, July 1-Oct. 18		2,223-0-0
Extraordinary expenses, Oct. 18-Dec. 31 ^c		683-0-0
Owed to recruits, Santa Marta gold		792-0-0
Pre-armada royalties		1,392-6-3
Total debits		20,690-4-6
Receipts		4,391-2-8
Deficit		16,299-1-10

^aEstimated equivalent of 111-6-0 in low-grade gold.

^bEstimated.

^cProrated from verified extraordinary expenses, Oct. 1514-Oct. 1515.

amicable rating. It availed them nothing to give gold and their own slaves in tribute; they were declared in revolt if they did not produce more. Those who failed to profess instant obedience to a Requirement they were given no opportunity to understand—or, very often, to hear—were rebels; so were those who in terror burned their bohíos and fled to the hills when they heard that a Spanish column was on the march. The days when sociable tribesmen wandered in and out of Santa María were done forever; the only way to get an Indian into the settlement to have him roped or chained.

Pedrarias and the officials promoted slaving by a proclamation to the effect that any native who did not obey the Requirement could be exported and sold, and opened the way to semiclandestine merchandising of naborias by ordering that they too be branded, on the thigh. The Indians, thus stimulated, became adept at evasion. Captives learned to file through their fetters, using sand and threads of maho fiber, and if they could not escape alive, frequently employed their perverse faculty of dying at will. The friendly chiefs who called Balboa Elder Brother and Father and Lord had been tormented and plundered, and some of the best of them had been killed. More exactly, six months after Pedrarias landed, there were no more friendly chiefs in Cueva.

Possibly, chivalrous domination under the motto *noblesse oblige*—so frequently encountered in political theory—is never realized save in small compass and for brief periods. In Castilla del Oro it was doomed from the day the armada arrived. In the last analysis, the fault was not with the troops, succinctly described by Fray Diego de Torres as “having neither sense nor self-control,” or even with the reckless captains who led them. Behind these were the Governor and the officials—who did not order indiscriminate rapine and violence, who carefully repeated to expeditionary leaders the royal instructions to wise moderation, but who were nevertheless what Spanish law calls the “intellectual perpetrators” of the crimes. They have been excused on the grounds that they had to meet a budget out of all proportion to reasonable revenues, which was true. But their most compelling motive was the profit they got for themselves.

Pedrarias and his colleagues employed two systems: the rake-off and the kickback. The established rake-off on gold, pearls, and other

loot was at first limited to two lots for the Governor, to which was added later one first-class share for each official. That on slaves and naborias was enjoyed by both Pedrarias and the officials from the beginning, and varied according to the number of captives and the degree of whitewashing required for the entrada. Captains who failed to deliver enough booty were apt to find themselves in difficulties. They were not really punished, because each was the special protégé of one or another of the functionaries, and hence by the law of the political jungle protected by all, but their post-entrada residencias had a way of showing them liable for supplemental payments or fines, and they were apt to be excluded from further command. Kickback rates were flexible; the Governor and officials stuffed the expeditions with needy recruits, dependents, and even servants, who handed over twenty-five or fifty per cent of their earnings to their patrons. The whole thing was facilitated by the appointment of Pedrarias' criado, Diego de Maldonado, as distributor of loot.

Although the reports of the Governor and of Puente mentioned the Indians only to complain of their unreasonable behavior, other responsible observers were at pains to inform the King that the natives, the Requirement, and the royal instructions were being cynically abused. The Bishop told him, in forcible terms; Fray Diego warned that the colonists were "doing their best not to leave one Indian at liberty," and that more stringent curbs were necessary. Balboa wrote repeatedly protesting against the blind cruelty that ignored all but immediate gain and against the twice-blind official policy of abetment; he urged the King to send a qualified visitador from Hispaniola to investigate this and, in passing, the financial administration of the colony. It is unlikely that many of these letters came to Fernando's hand. Pedrarias had not yet perfected his comprehensive system in which interference with the mails was supplemented by subtraction and falsification of records, but at the time letters written in late 1514 and early 1515 were being considered in Spain, King Fernando, ravaged by illness, was no longer attending in person to correspondence with Castilla del Oro.

It is obvious that more important documents about the colony were lost or destroyed than have been preserved for our enlightenment. We get tantalizing glimpses of some of them: Balboa's accounts

of "all that happened"; reports from Pedrarias and Espinosa; letters from Corral; the "picture of the land" made by Balboa and the Bishop, "showing the chiefs who were once peaceful and who are now hostile, or destroyed; they are those indicated from that gulf all along the coast to the west, and inland to the South Sea."¹ Nevertheless, enough data can be gathered from the records to round out a view of Castilla del Oro in its first months.

Bachiller Corral and his jackal, Pérez de la Rúa, had been made regidores of Santa María, together with Francisco Vallejo and Lope de Olano. (All proceedings against Olano had evidently been dropped.) A scheme to make Corral public prosecutor in Balboa's residencia had been blocked by Espinosa, who said that it would be unjust to have a prosecuting attorney when the accused was not permitted counsel. The merchants were threatening to leave, ostensibly because they could not collect their bills, due to the officials' insistence on prior payment of debts to the royal hacienda, but also perhaps because there were too many of them for so shrunken and impoverished a colony. Contrariwise, Tavira was well on his way to accumulating a fortune by (a) overcharging for Crown goods and pocketing the difference, (b) selling butts of flour to groups of colonists and then collecting the full price from each group member who needed a quittance to leave the colony, and (c) using the receipts for personal speculation.

A hundred and fifty men of the expedition to Cenú and fifty of those under Ayora had come back sick to Santa María, and a public subscription was taken to ship half of them out to Hispaniola. A hundred of the paid recruits were dismissed, and it was planned to do the same with the remainder as soon as they could be spared. (Oddly enough, despite pestilence and other fatalities, the number of men for whom wages were debited had remained the same.) It was also proposed to get rid of ten of the thirty peones hired to guard forts, and to give ten of the others double pay on condition that they lend a hand with public works. A ship, and possibly two, came in from Santo Domingo; five were dispatched, filled with departing colonists, at the beginning of December.

There were two fires. From one the doctor and his wife escaped in the middle of the night with nothing more than their shifts. The other partially destroyed the storage shed which had been erected at the

seashore, causing dark rumors that Tavira had resorted to arson to cloak shortages in the stock of provisions. One other incident is recorded. It started with the theft of a cotton jacket "worth at most a ducat," which a *compañero* named Cuenca had been moved to filch when he saw the sleeve protruding temptingly between the canes of a storeroom wall. The pilferer was caught and sentenced to death by quartering. Execution was in the plaza, and Pedrarias ordered that it be followed by a public autopsy—an educational treat at which Dr. Barreda officiated amid general interest.

Relieved of the preoccupation with stark survival of the plague-and-famine months, the colonists were as fractious as any convalescents, and with more excuse. Collective exasperation among the armada men was rooted in disillusionment; among the old settlers it was provoked by seeing painfully gained comfort and prospects lost through newcomers as inept as they were invasive. Many of the *vecinos* were angered by Pedrarias' redistribution of real estate holdings, in the course of which some of the best houses and lands had been taken for official use. Balboa was especially incensed: his two houses on the plaza, one of which rented for 200 pesos a year, were pre-empted by Pedrarias for himself. The Governor needed room—he had brought ten *criados*, a private secretary, a major-domo, and a numerous domestic staff, not to mention Doña Isabel's maids-in-waiting and attendants and the gubernatorial guard of ten *escuderos*. But what outraged Balboa was that he was forced to sell his property outright for 500 pesos, and that Pedrarias, squeezing himself and his household into one house, continued to rent out the other.

At the same time the intramural wrangles and backbiting common in small, isolated bureaucracies (and in large, central ones) were already apparent, with a main cleavage along what might be called the Balboa Fault. The Governor, the officials, and the *alguacil* Enciso were on one side; on the other were the Bishop and, though none too firmly, the *alcalde mayor*—supported, ironically enough, by Doña Isabel. Pedrarias must have found his wife's friendship with Balboa a little trying, and it is tempting to speculate if he did not encourage the idea she had at this time of returning to Castile partly because she cramped his style.

On the whole, the best summary of the state of Castilla del Oro in

late 1514 is to be found in two dispatches written by Treasurer Puente—not so much because of the information given, as because of what Puente's conclusions implied. Puente was extremely intelligent, and he was experiencing a temporary feeling of Olympian detachment. He expected to return to Spain, released from his duties for reasons of health in deference to the petition he had submitted with a supporting certificate from Dr. Barreda. He set forth the situation and prospects of the colony with considered pessimism, and on the basis of his findings submitted a drastic plan for the administrative reform of Castilla del Oro. This, briefly, was that the King should call the whole thing off and return the colony to an approximation of the *status quo ante*.²

The Treasurer explained that there was little hope of steady revenues to warrant a Crown administration of any kind. While it was true that there was gold in all the rivers, more perhaps than in Hispaniola, the mines would not pay the expense of working them unless it could be done with native labor. What was needed were peaceable Indians, given in repartimiento, and it appeared that this was not possible. Despite every effort to win the Indians' friendship—Puente said—they persisted in hiding out in the hills or, if captured, in running away. Moreover, the vaunted mines of Tubanamá did not exist; that district was poor and sterile territory where the chiefs gave little aid to the Spaniards, and the two garrisons stationed there had written that they were giving up and returning to Darién. As for treasure, Balboa and "the Christians who came afterwards" had already cleaned out the country for a forty-league radius around Santa María.

All this being so, the Treasurer proposed withdrawal of the government (an annual saving of 4,040,126 maravedíes) and of the Bishop and chapter (saving: 1,504,640 maravedíes). The colony could then be organized under two captains, one for Santa María and one for the new post at the Río de los Anades, with a lawyer as judge and vee-dores elected by the colonists. The only expense to the Crown would be a revenue collector "who could be had for 30,000 maravedíes," and two or three priests at an "honest" salary. It would be necessary to command that three hundred men remain in each settlement, and to make up the number with old colonists, but it seemed probable that on this basis they could count on a profit for each entrada, per

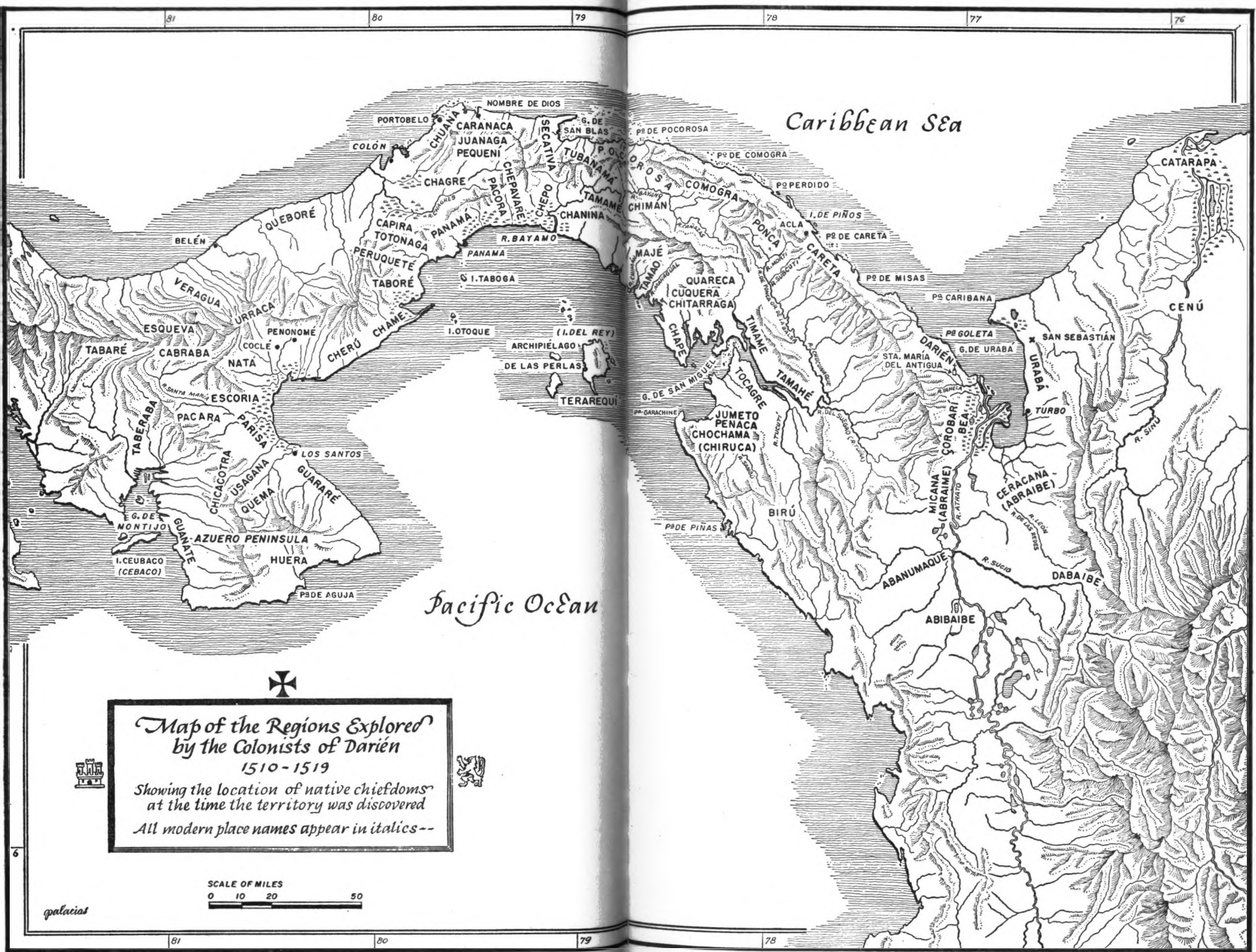
man, of four or five pesos of gold and three or four slaves for sale in Hispaniola, which would be enough to support them. Puente suggested, too, that criminals condemned in Castile to death or to amputation of limbs should have their sentences commuted to banishment to Castilla del Oro, which he evidently considered a more or less equivalent penalty. (Someone in Spain scribbled a note to this which remarks dryly: "Those who might be so sentenced here would be few, to think it would produce much population.")

Although some of its premises were faulty, the Treasurer's plan was fundamentally sound, aside from bits like peopling the colony with murderers and having an unsupervised revenue collector on bare subsistence pay. He undoubtedly had the benefit of interested suggestions; one fancies that a list of eventual captains, town magistrates, judge, councilmen, *et al.*, was already drawn up, and that Vasco Núñez de Balboa was conspicuously absent from it. Someone in Castile suggested that the proposal be submitted to Pedrarias and the other officials for an opinion—which was not quite what Puente had in mind. But by the time it might have been considered, government in the Indies was not susceptible to radical changes. For nearly two years, from the last months of Fernando's illness until after the tardy arrival in Spain of his successor, Carlos, no important decisions could be taken in colonial affairs.

XXII

IN many respects the end of 1514 closed a chapter very tidily—the plague was over, the last mass departures had been early in December, Balboa's merits had been recognized by the King, Espinosa had disposed of the main criminal counts of the residencia, the Indians had been alienated, the officials and the Bishop had made reports. Nevertheless, the initial period of Pedrarias' rule in Castilla del Oro did not really end until March of 1515. For one thing, there was the matter of the first entradas, which straggled over into February.

Other captains had been sent out after the first three expeditions



left in July and August: in September, Bartolomé Hurtado; in October, Antonio Téllez de Gusmán and Juan Escudero; in November, Esteban Barrantes. Considering that Ayora split his expedition four ways, there was a short space in November when ten separate companies were in the field, with a combined force of about a thousand men. Some had been merely dispatched on errands, others were supposed to be founding permanent settlements, one had been sent to explore and conquer important new territory. With a single exception, all either failed or grossly transgressed their instructions. The expedition to Cenú, under Pedrarias the Nephew and Enciso, did both.

Young Pedrarias had four hundred men,¹ fresh troops excellently equipped, and since he did not divide his forces as Ayora did, he was theoretically one of the strongest captains in the story of the conquest. Balboa made the expedition to the Pacific with less than ninety men, Quesada took the Chibcha kingdoms with a hundred and sixty-six, Pizarro invaded the Inca Empire with a hundred and eighty-three. Pedrarias the Nephew and Enciso, whose ultimate goal was the long-coveted mines of Mocrí and Tirufí, beyond the headwaters of the Sinú River, got fifteen miles inland, took two villages, and returned wreathed in feeble excuses before the end of November. The Bishop contemptuously ascribed their fiasco to cold feet. Enciso wrote more benevolent accounts (in which, incidentally, he cut the number of expeditionaries to two hundred, which sounded much better); even from these, however, it seems that the Bishop was not far wrong. At any rate, Pedrarias the Nephew and the bachiller refused to proceed with their itinerary despite a most inviting offer from the ingratiating headman of the second village. The headman, who may have had other ideas than those of simple helpfulness, promised to guide the expedition not only to Cenú but also to the mines. The Cenues, he said, were his friends, and by implication, friendly; their capital—on the river, not more than twenty-five or thirty miles inland—was enormously wealthy. The mines, among which he named two previously unreported, could be reached by easy, level marches. He himself had seen gold seined from them in nuggets as big as walnuts. It is hard to see how so tempting a proposal could have been turned down, especially as the headman had made an excellent impression on the bachiller. ("He found him a most truthful man and one who kept

his word, and the bad seemed to him bad and the good, good.") But perhaps it was just as well that young Pedrarias and Enciso, those prudent warriors, declined to accept it. The Cenues were far less amiable, and the way to the mines much more difficult, than the headman made out. The expedition returned to Santa María soon after November twentieth. Its score was two hundred captives and slightly over 500 pesos in loot as against forty-five Spaniards dead (including a particularly able officer, much recommended by the King, named Bustamante) and over a hundred sick. Since the undertaking had been wholly at Crown expense and in Crown ships, the King got two thirds of the proceeds in addition to the quinto. What was left to divide among the participants was 139 pesos of gold loot and 277 pesos realized (some months later) from slaves. It worked out at about one peso per man.

The most interesting information of the entrada is the account Enciso wrote of the chief's reaction to the Requirement. This had been first read by Enciso in Spanish from a bergantín hove-to at a safe distance from the Indians of Catarapa. The expeditionaries had then marched on the village, which they took with some losses. Enciso implies that before this action the local chieftains had met them in truce if not in friendship, and again heard the Requirement. The rest of the story is best left in the bachiller's own words:

They answered me that what I said about there being only one God and that He governed the heavens and the earth and was Lord of all things, seemed good to them, and that so it should be; but regarding what I said that the Pope was lord of the Universe in the stead of God and that he had granted that land to the King of Castile, they said that the Pope must have been drunk when he did it, since he gave away what was not his, and that the King who asked and took the grant must be some madman, because he asked for what belonged to others, and that if anyone went to seize it they would have his head on a pole . . . and that they were lords of that land and had no need of other lords.

I again required them to [submit] otherwise I would make war on them and take their places and would kill as many as I could seize and take them and sell them as slaves. And they answered me that they would have my head on a pole first, and they tried to do it but they could not because we took the village by force.

The lord of Catarapa was one of the captives taken to Santa María. He was not long in the settlement. He did not resist, or try to escape, or take poison. Too proud for slavery, he simply decided, like the princess from Santa Marta, that he did not care to live, and died.

Luis Carrillo, who had been sent to the Río de los Anades, a day's travel south of Santa María did rather better with his assignment. Carrillo was young and incompetent, but he had been given Pizarro (the eternal top sergeant) to show him the ropes, and he had been commissioned only to establish and garrison a subsettlement. The settlement, named Fonseca de Avila, was in pleasant, relatively open country "between two rivers"—apparently those now called Arquía and Cuque. It was far healthier than Santa María at its best, and the native inhabitants—the tribes of Bea and Çorobarí—were described by Cieza de León as among the most attractive he had seen in the Indies.² But the district was circumscribed by the Atrato swamp-lands on one side and the shouldering sierra on the other; its rivers held less gold than had been hoped, and although it made a good jumping-off place for the Trepadera and even for the easy Cacarica-Paya pass (over which the Indians could drag their canoes from one watershed to the other), no one was sufficiently interested in exploration by those routes to warrant a permanent base there. After a few months Carrillo and Pizarro became excessively bored. They determined to abandon the post, make a raid on neighboring Abraime to pick up what they could, and return to Darién. In January, a week or so after letters had gone to Spain saying how well their settlement was doing, they turned up in Santa María with over a thousand pesos of gold and, Oviedo says, many Indians. Fonseca de Avila was never revived. It has been mentioned that Carrillo was brother-in-law to Lope de Conchillos. He was not disciplined.

The expedition entrusted to Juan de Ayora was of another category, since it was intended to overlie all previous exploration in the Isthmus and to establish permanent settlements, notably in Tubanamá and on the Pacific coast. In one sense it was the most important ever undertaken in Cueva—not because it was either constructive or successful, but because of its devastating effect, which was immediate and indelible.

Ayora had four hundred and forty men, fifty to seventy of them

veteran colonists. His captains or acting captains, some of whom he created *ad hoc*, were: Hernán Pérez de Meneses; Juan de Zorita (who had preceded the armada to the Canaries to take charge of the amphibious Guanches); Juan de Gamarra; Francisco de Avila (or Dávila); Benito Hurtado, a twenty-two-year-old criado of Contador Márquez; Fernando de Atienza, whose only claim to notice is the trouble he has caused historians who confuse him with a veteran colonist named Blas de Atienza; and Francisco de Becerra. Becerra, an hidalgo whose distinguished father saw that his career in the Indies was furthered by occasional letters of recommendation from the King, was the only baquiano officer. He had come to Darién from Hispaniola in 1513, and may have accompanied Garabito when he crossed to the Gulf of San Miguel via the Trepadera; at all events, he was now chosen to repeat that route with a company of forty men, and from the mouth of the Tuíra to make his way to the seacoast near the Pearl Islands, to join a second detachment which would cross from Comogre.

The expedition left Santa María in four caravels and the big boat, dropped Becerra and his men at "the port of the Trepadera," and then went to Port of Comogre, eight leagues beyond Careta. Here Ayora divided his forces. Francisco de Avila³ was sent to the Pacific coast with a hundred and fifty men, and Zorita to Port of Pocorosa, twelve leagues farther on, with another fifty. Zorita was to keep only the boat for his use; the ships returned to Darién, presumably for service with Pedrarias the Nephew. Ayora, with the remaining two hundred men, marched to—or rather on—the capital of Comogre.

Ponquiaco met the Spaniards with his usual cordiality, although he was disappointed not to see Balboa, and offered the usual gifts and banquet. He remarked that Ayora was not like his friend the white tibá, but the comment seems to have been purely on physical resemblance. Only an hour or two later it was demonstrated how deep the difference went. Having dined, Ayora rose from his host's table and ordered him seized and bound, demanding gold. Ponquiaco gave fifteen pounds of gold "as a present for the King," but Ayora was not satisfied; there must be more, or he would have the young chief torn to pieces by the war dogs. Somehow, Ponquiaco got away, together with a visiting jura, brother to Careta. The dogs were set after them,

and killed Careta's brother; Ponquiaco escaped into Pocorosa only to fall into the hands of his traditional enemies, who promptly murdered him. Ayora carried out some punitive measures, always to him a congenial occupation—a few hangings, tortures, and dog killings; handed over all the espaves to the troops and wrote off Comogre as "hostile."

After this auspicious beginning the expedition went on to Pocorosa, where much the same routine was followed, and from there, taking the chief of Pocorosa along as a hostage, to Tubanamá. Ayora was mounted on a good mare, and along the way he invented a diverting sport—to ride down the Indians who were clearing the way before him, and spear them as they fled. Unfortunately the Spaniards were in Tubanamá before news of this game reached the village, and Chief Tamaname came out with the old friendly welcome. It was promptly answered by the new treachery, capture and extortion—Ayora's idea of the appropriate preliminaries for founding a settlement. On this basis he would have done better to kill the chiefs out of hand. Tamaname escaped, and both he and Pocorosa were to cost the colony dear.

The tibá of Pocorosa, who had made submission and received a guarantee of peace, went back to his village; it took further brutalities to push him into a belligerence not of his seeking. Tamaname rounded up what warriors he could and attacked the Spanish camp. The Indians withdrew after a sharp battle, and Ayora, after hustling his men into erecting breastworks of earth and branches that same night, thereafter indulged his sadistic tastes with special gusto. However, the best of fun palls in time, and the Indians, even when being slowly roasted to death, had ceased to produce any more gold. Ayora announced that his health obliged him to return to Darién. Captain Meneses, with a hundred men, would remain to hold the fort at Tubanamá.

Ayora returned to Darién by way of the Port of Pocorosa, where—presumably about September fourteenth, day of the Holy Cross—he formally established the camp as a settlement, naming it Santa Cruz. From here he dispatched Gamarra with a small force, by sea, to raid nearby Secativa (San Blas). In a few days the raiders were back, much the worse for wear, to tell how the chief of Secativa had fallen on them from ambush and battered them into hasty retreat. Ayora's

reaction was curious: breathing fire, he determined to retaliate by assaulting Pocorosa. His subalterns had some difficulty in dissuading him from killing Peter to pay out Paul, and one veteran colonist who protested too vigorously (and, it was rumored, sent a warning to the prospective victim) was threatened with hanging. In the end, Ayora gave in, took the burchón, and went to Darién. Oviedo says that Benito Hurtado, "a cruel and licentious youth without experience or good sense," was put in charge of the port; from other chronicles, supported by a reference in one of Pedrarias' letters, it appears that the captain left in Santa Cruz was Diego Garci Alvarez.⁴

Ayora and his escort reached Santa María at the beginning of October. Late in the month he sailed more or less surreptitiously for Castile, taking with him a large part of the gold secured on the entrada. It was afterwards said that he stole the caravel in which he made his getaway. This, however, seems a difficult thing to achieve single-handed, and Pedrarias had already admitted, before the story was evolved, that he gave Ayora permission to leave (without undergoing the customary residencia of returned captains) because of his ill-health. The gossip of the time was that the Governor lent a helping hand—while extending the other, palm up—to the brother of his dearest friend, so that he might be out of the way before he could be investigated. Two years later it was said in Spain that Ayora's whereabouts were unknown, but he apparently came out of hiding after King Fernando's death; in 1518 Zorita sued him over the hijacked loot.

While central Cueva was being ravaged to small profit, Becerra and Avila were conducting what were to all effects independent entradas. Avila does not burden the history; he reached the coast without recorded incident, and settled down to contemplative occupation of Tamao, near the Río Chimán. Becerra, on the other hand, was extremely dynamic, as if to demonstrate that a baquiano captain with forty men was worth more than a chapetón with several hundred. He was responsible for the only bit of real exploration which could be technically credited to Ayora's command.

Oviedo, in one of two conflicting accounts of the entrada, accuses Becerra rather vaguely of "more cruelty than any former captain." This one can dismiss as a piece of careless reporting, particularly as

Oviedo himself in another passage says that compared with certain other captains, Becerra was "without sin." The facts speak for themselves. Becerra was in well-settled country; he visited fifteen chiefs, some of them powerful rulers who counted their subjects in thousands; he traveled without haste, and returned to pass again through every village in which he had stayed on the outward journey. It is quite impossible that he could have done this, with a force of just over three dozen men, except in friendship. When he returned to Darién, he reported that the Indians had been well disposed, and those he brought with him were not classed as slaves. This last is a gilt-edged certificate of good conduct for both Becerra and the chiefs he encountered, in view of the fact that a negotiable, exportable slave was what every official and colonist wanted "more than anything in the world." Finally, when one of Pedrarias' captains took the Garabito-Becerra route to the Gulf of San Miguel some three months later, he found the Indians friendly and helpful. He did not leave them in the same state.

Becerra's worst moment, in fact, was one he shared with his native hosts. He was staying with Chief Jumeto, whose river was perhaps the present Taimatí, when some terrified Indians came in with news that war canoes filled with cannibals were approaching. The cannibals, they said, were big, black, curly-haired, stout-bellied, bearded, and bent on mischief. Becerra tried to be reassuring, but he must have felt a little nervous as he awaited the arrival of the man-eaters; he had already heard about the black savages who were said to live in the mountains south of the Gulf. The reported cannibals turned out to be Spaniards. At this point the official relation drops the subject without explanation, perhaps because the Spaniards in question belonged to an out-of-bounds entrada (to be noted later) whose regrettable activities were hushed up for what is politely known as a consideration.

Becerra heard more about the black men of the hills from the chiefs farther west: in Chochama at the Río Sambú, at Topogre and Chuchara up that river, and at Garachiné, just inside the barrier promontory between the Gulf and the sea. And in this connection he learned of Birú, or Pirú, a rich and savage mountain province twenty-five or thirty leagues to the south, the name of which was to be transferred by the Spaniards to the Inca Empire. The incident at Jumeto would

seem to be enough of itself to explain away the myth of Negroid aboriginals in this region; it may be remembered that the Indians used the term "black" for "evil." There were plenty of primitive, aggressive natives in that territory, many rather darker-skinned than the Isthmian Indians and some of them anthropophagous, but there were no indigenous Negroes.

Becerra would have liked to investigate Birú, the black men and their gold, and the reported mines of the interior, but there are limits to what can be done with twoscore *compañeros*. He turned back reluctantly to Tutibra at the mouth of the Río Tuíra, where the chief ("Toto, son of Ocra") gave him canoes and paddlers to cross to Chape and Tumaca. Just beyond Tumaca he came to Avila's camp in Tamao.

Avila (need one say?) had been ill, and wanted to go back to Darién; Becerra, fit and successful, wanted to remain. The two quarreled, and Becerra went off for a time on his own, but before long the disagreement was healed and the two captains, who had probably heard about Ayora's defection from the wayward "cannibal" entrada, set out together for Santa María. They arrived in January, with a take of nearly seven thousand pesos of gold and, according to Oviedo, three hundred Indians—mostly collected by Becerra.

Within a few days of their return Meneses came in with the garrison from Tubanamá.

The Spaniards left in Tubanamá had been unhappy for some time, and the arrival there of a supporting expedition under Téllez de Gusmán had made them no happier. Gusmán had been sent out with eighty men as a result of Ayora's desertion, to reinforce and reorganize the new settlements and to get the chiefs to give them Indians. He found that it was not much good reinforcing a post where the garrison, having eaten its way through most of the available food supply, was holding body and soul together on a diet of unadorned maize. Besides which, Meneses and his men did not want to be reinforced; they wanted to be relieved. It was decided to abandon the so-called settlement; Gusmán, taking the thirty strongest *compañeros* of the garrison to augment his company, would go westward to see what could be gained from chiefs as yet unvisited beyond the Río Chepo; Meneses with the rest of the troops would go to Darién. As for

Santa Cruz, it seems that the healthy *compañeros* went to Santa María with Benito Hurtado, leaving thirty sick behind them in charge of Garci Alvarez.

The post in Port of Pocorosa was thus left without supplies, without support, and without able defenders. As might have been foreseen, its survival was brief. The Indians waited only long enough to see Gusmán well away and to be reassured (by Meneses' burning of his fort) that the garrison in Tubanamá had gone for good. Then, past rivalries forgotten in a common vengeance, they proceeded to wipe out Santa Cruz in a massacre from which only one Spaniard escaped. The survivor was a woman, whom a chief took for himself; some years later she was murdered by jealous co-concubines, who told their lord that a crocodile had eaten her.

Oviedo says that Benito Hurtado was among the massacred, but this is a mistake; he was very much alive for years thereafter in the colony. For that matter, in 1523 Oviedo submitted a report on the misdoings in Castilla del Oro, of which Paragraph 14 is a statement that Benito Hurtado, returning to Darién, persuaded Careta to lend him twelve or fifteen porters and a çabra-foreman, and that once he got them to Darién he had them branded as slaves, buying immunity for this and other crimes by gifts of Indians to the Governor and officials. Thirty-four years later (in 1548) when writing the part of his chronicle which tells of this treachery, Oviedo attributed it to *Bartolomé Hurtado*.

The first news of the destruction of Santa Cruz was brought to Santa María by Téllez de Gusmán about the end of February. Coming back through Tubanamá and Pocorosa, his force of a hundred and ten men had been harried for six days by menacing Indians who waved the bloody garments of the Spaniards of Santa Cruz in taunting triumph. Gusmán had been expected to pick up the sick garrison at the port as he returned, but in the circumstances he had not dared to investigate; besides, he was bringing nearly twenty thousand pesos of gold⁵ and better than two thousand pesos' worth of captives, and he did not want to risk losing them. Pedrarias subsequently sent a party to investigate, "and they found no Christians, but all dead."

Gusmán's entrada had covered Chepo, Chepavare, Pacora, Panamá, and Chagre. For all the lurid accusations leveled at it in the chronicles,

it appears to have been, if not kind, at least less cruel than most. This may have been because a good deal of it was left to the veteran colonist, Diego Albítez. Like Becerra, he was one of Balboa's better pupils, although he drew away, to his considerable advantage, after Pedrarias' arrival. A year after this entrada with Gusmán, when Albítez went through the same territory with another expedition, he was sent ahead to Chepo to pave the way "because the chief knew him well and had much friendship for him," and the Spaniards were well received. The same happened in Chepavare and in Pacora, although in point of fact, the good will in Pacora was the direct result of the only definite instance of violence recounted of Gusmán's entrada. In this village Gusmán hanged out of hand the headman, who had received him with unusual affability, because he had been informed that the victim had seized the chieftdom from the legitimate heir. One version of the story says that for good measure seven of the usurper's nobles were executed with him. The reinstated ruler—then aged about four years—was to show his gratitude by a continuing friendship with the Spaniards, and since the infant also gave Gusmán 6000 pesos of gold, no doubt the hasty hanging was considered a successful bit of frontier justice.⁶

Three other entradas rounded out the first intensive expeditionary program. One was led by Esteban Barrantes "to Bea and other neighbors of Cemaco." It was unimportant and undescribed. A colonist who pulled strings to get himself named veedor of the expedition was afterwards unable to leave Darién because he could not pay a 4-peso debt, which is not surprising in view of the fact that Barrantes' gross proceeds came to 43 pesos. An equally unprofitable raid, but which had far-reaching effects, was that conducted by Juan Escudero, a mariner who had graduated to pilot in the colony, and who on this occasion promoted himself to leader of an entrada. It was a thoroughly disgraceful affair from first to last.

Escudero had been sent with the two ships which took Gusmán's expedition on the first leg of its journey. His further instructions were merely to try to get some canoes in Careta for use in the projected expedition to Dabaibe. What he did was to take a party across the Isthmus, and there is little doubt that he and his companions were the "cannibals" who scared the natives of Jumeto. The Jumetos did

not know how lucky they were that Becerra had got there first. Among Escudero's exploits was the murder of Balboa's friend, the chieftain of Chape, "who was very loyal and peaceable"; an unprovoked assault on Chief Ponca, after which, one is happy to learn, Ponca succeeded in "stealing" Escudero's loot; and, "without any excuse whatever," in some slaving-with-violence in Careta. Fortunately, good Chief Chima was spared knowledge of the outrage; he had died a few weeks before. For the Caretaes it was the last straw: they took to the hills, leaving Chima's successor (regent for the young heir) almost alone in the village. Careta was never again the kindly, prosperous place it had been before Pedrarias came.

Escudero got back to Santa María late in December. Balboa, while he had nothing against slaving in recalcitrant and cannibal provinces, was outraged by the wanton abuse of friendly chiefdoms, and he made no bones about saying so. He remonstrated vigorously with Pedrarias, pointing out the error of a policy which would ruin the colony for the temporary prosperity of a few settlers, and asking the Governor, if he would not curb indiscriminate slaving, at least to remove the main incentive to it by forbidding sale of Indians abroad. Balboa wrote the King that Pedrarias' reply was "that it was best to allow it for the present, so that the troops get something to support themselves." Escudero got off with temporary arrest, motivated chiefly by his carelessness in losing his loot and quickly terminated when he handed over some gold he had left on deposit with Espinosa.

The last entrada on the list was led by Bartolomé Hurtado. Oviedo says that it was made with twenty men to Tubanamá, that it was completed before Ayora returned to Santa María, and that it brought in a large amount of gold and slaves. But Oviedo is telescoping two different journeys, and the first of them was not an expedition but an errand. In September of 1514 Hurtado was sent to deliver dispatches at Ayora's headquarters and bring back news of the operations in Cueva; he found Meneses holding the fort in Tubanamá, learned that Ayora was on his way to Darién via Santa Cruz, and returned at once with the information to Santa María. The whole trip was done at express speed, in less than a month. And while Hurtado did deliver over 2100 pesos of gold, nearly 1000 pesos' worth of slaves, and some pearls, he did not collect them in those three weeks in September,

while racing through already hostile country which had just been efficiently plundered. They were the booty of the real expedition, which cannot have started until late in the year. The gold was registered on February 27, 1515, and the slaves auctioned on March 7; Puente's accounts specify that the proceeds were from the entrada Hurtado "made in this year to Pocorosa and Tubanamá." The curious thing is the timing. For if, as seems likely, Hurtado was sent out to give aid and comfort to the Ayora garrisons after it was learned in December that they meditated abandoning the posts in Cueva, why was Santa Cruz left an unprotected prey for the Indians?

Incidentally, an analysis of the data on Hurtado's booty, and still more, of that of Gusmán, reveals the working of another graft—or better, two grafts—which became the official fashion in Castilla del Oro. One consisted in juggling payments reckoned in specie against receipts of unrefined and sometimes unmelted gold. The other was to juggle the gold itself so as to alter its fineness, sometimes by resmelting with an admixture of very low-carat guanín, sometimes by simple mismarking. (It was explained that Ruy Díaz, in charge of smelting and marking, had very bad eyesight!) These and other ingenious practices, coupled with sketchy bookkeeping and a tendency to mislay portions of the records, made the accountancy of the administration impenetrable to the most determined audit. Also, to be on the safe side, audits were postponed by neglecting to forward regular financial statements to Spain.

All the entradas were concluded by early March of 1515. According to Puente's records, they delivered in eight or nine weeks 29,192 pesos of "good" gold, 1325 pesos of guanín and 3683 pesos' worth of slaves. How many unregistered captives were brought in during the same period to be distributed as naborias, and how many were slipped to the Governor and other functionaries cannot be calculated. Whichever of the Hurtados borrowed and subsequently seized the porters from Careta presented—so Oviedo declared—over thirty Indians where it would do most good: six "pieces" to Pedrarias, six to the Bishop, four to each official and to the alcalde mayor. It will be noted that this adds up to only twenty-eight Indians. One may suspect that the righteous chief veedor, who was also in charge of branding and registry of captives, got the remaining pieces.

It might be thought that the spurt in revenue was the motive for the next expeditions in the Isthmus. In point of fact, it was only a contributory inducement. The real reason, as we shall see, was again Balboa—who, impoverished, constrained, and thwarted, was still the spring that moved events in Castilla del Oro.

XXIII

THE situation in Castilla del Oro was nothing to be proud of in the first months of 1515, but it was certainly much better than it had been until then. The improvement did not, however, extend to relations among what is currently known as top brass. Animosities can be gauged by the accusations of corruption and bad management that were bandied about: Puente paid out too much without accounting for expenditures; Márquez did not do his work properly; Tavira embezzled; Espinosa took bribes; the Governor was not up to his job—in short, the usual crop of allegations, most of which seem in this case to have been true. Pedrarias complicated matters by lending an apparently sympathetic ear to the damaging tales each functionary told him, and then repeating them to the people concerned. But whatever their differences, they hung together on the matter of their profits from entradas, and in a growing antipathy for the Bishop.

Quevedo, who by royal decree might not be excluded from the government and by predilection exercised his prerogative to the full, could be uncommonly inconvenient when he chose—which was often enough to keep the Governor and the officials in a simmer of exasperation. The administration was like a mutual benefit society whose members, disliking each other but appreciative of corporate advantages, were compelled to accept an outspoken critic on the board. Furthermore, Quevedo made it almost impossible to eliminate Balboa, or for that matter, even to exclude him. What the Bishop knew Balboa knew also, and what Balboa opined the Bishop expressed with vigor and authority.

Thus in mid-February of 1515, the officials composed a letter de-

nouncing Quevedo for neglect of his episcopal duties and undue favoring of Vasco Núñez.¹ The first was exemplified by his failure to build a cathedral or to take sufficient measures to convert the Indians—charges that were hardly worth presenting in view of what was known of the past months in the colony. The second was supported by another letter dedicated to the general wickedness of Balboa, and by the record of Pedrarias' secret inquiry into Balboa's "crimes," which had been reconstructed after the Governor had been obliged to hand over the original to Espinosa. These and other dispatches, none of which are known save through references in subsequent correspondence, were entrusted for delivery to Pedrarias the Nephew, who also received copious instructions as to what he was to say in oral report.

The Bishop, of course, learned of this offensive, and promptly arranged countermeasures. Young Pedrarias sailed from Darién on February sixteenth, and on the same ship went Quevedo's chancellor, with letters and a memorandum in thirty-six numbered paragraphs headed: "The things on which you, Toribio Cintado, chancellor, must inform the King our lord are the following . . ."

Compared to other such documents to be examined later, Quevedo's memorandum was rather restrained. Nevertheless, nearly every paragraph packed a reflection on the efficiency, honesty, or intentions of the Governor and the officials, or on the capacities and conduct of the armada captains. Its then-and-now descriptions of the colony pointed a bitter contrast. It passed in review the greedy cruelty of expeditionary leaders selected without judgment and operating without fear of retribution, the crimes and failures, the abandonment of settlements "which once could have been defended by a few dog-catchers," the distrust and hatred engendered in the Indians—all thrown into high relief by references to conditions under Balboa. Quevedo spoke of the disgust of old settlers dispossessed of their lots and lands (with special mention of Balboa's houses), and about the blight of lawsuits that had fallen on Santa María. He told how the residencia was being used to hamstring Vasco Núñez, although, declared "innocent or at least no guiltier than everyone else" of the criminal charges, he should have been free to go anywhere after sixty days, leaving an attorney-in-fact to represent him in civil suits.

The Governor was disposed to send Vasco Núñez [to Dabaibel], and for fear of what his adversaries said did not dare to do it. But after His Highness wrote to the Governor recommending Vasco Núñez, saying that he should be honored and that by the good that was done to him His Highness would know what will the Governor had to serve him, and that he should take Balboa's opinion and advice—from that time forth and forever he has been unable to tolerate him; and even if he knew that by [Balboa's] hand the lives of us here would be saved, he would do nothing by the hand of Vasco Núñez.

I swear by the Holy Consecration I received that to the best of my belief no one of those who are here has more complete desire to serve His Highness, or could accomplish with better art and method all the good that can possibly be done here; so much so that I believe that in spite of the turbulent state of the country, if he were again to treat with the chiefs and Indians he would once more pacify and reconcile them. But the Governor is so useless for this sort of thing that seeing, confessedly, how the land is ruined in the ways I have said, he no more occupies himself in remedying matters than if he were not here.

Pedrarias' concerns, Quevedo said acidly, were petty real estate deals and tidying up the streets, while the government was held in contempt because its ordinances were not enforced.

Many times to the Governor alone, and other times in front of the officials, I have admonished and reprovved him, with much courtesy and esteem, especially begging and entreating him, for his own self-respect, to make himself feared so that the people be afraid to disobey his orders, and that he be guarded with those who gossip, and that once he has said something he be steadfast in it.

Quevedo had also served a formal "requirement" on the Governor to stop the exportation of Indians to Hispaniola, and had expostulated with him about the excesses, betrayals, and bad faith of the expeditionaries. ". . . and because I enjoined him not to permit these abuses, he avoids me."

One can readily understand that the Bishop did not endear himself to his reluctant colleagues, and that, as he said, they kept him out of their councils whenever they could. "Not for this have I ever failed

to follow and accompany the Governor with as much respect as if to His Highness, and no one in the town hears from me that I am displeased," Quevedo wrote, adding inconsequently, "except that I have made public and wished it known that it is not with my counsel that certain things are done at present."

Although he had a natural objection to being pushed aside, the Bishop would have been happy to leave Castilla del Oro. Puente, declaring that there was no visible hope of paying ecclesiastical salaries, had advised the remaining priests to go elsewhere. Quevedo said that if he had enough to feed him he would be glad to stay, and that were it possible to support himself from the land he would not importune for salary. But since neither his age nor his office nor the habit he wore permitted this, and since he was actually in need, he was obliged to ask to be transferred to Santo Domingo or to Castile. For once in accord with Puente, he advised that the whole elaborate setup in Castilla del Oro was a profitless extravagance, and the best thing would be to abolish it and leave the colony as before, with four hundred and fifty or five hundred men, a captain, two priests, and a judge.

It is quite possible that had King Fernando lived, the colony would have become once more what it had been before Pedrarias' arrival, and—in view of the enthusiasm in Spain over the discovery of the South Sea and of the pressure exerted by the Bishop and Pasamonte—that Vasco Núñez would have been its commander. The unanimity of Puente and Quevedo was convincing in itself. The tales brought by men who had fled the colony had ruined the market for volunteers, and it was evident that the functionaries in Santa María were restrained from leaving only by the impossibility of doing so without the King's permission.

The Bishop, as we have seen, had his eye fixed on the see of Santo Domingo, and, failing that, wished to return to Castile. Pedrarias nursed a hope of being allowed to go "to report to the King." Puente had asked to be relieved for reasons of health. Tavira petitioned for release unless certain special privileges were accorded him. Espinosa wanted to give up his post. Oviedo was determined to go to Spain, answering the Governor's objections by saying he must fetch his wife. Fray Diego de Torres planned to leave to report to his order. Most of the captains were only waiting for clearance to get away, and the

priests had been persuaded with difficulty to stay for a few months longer. In fact, the sole member of the administration who does not seem to have been thinking up excuses to get himself recalled was Contador Márquez—of whom practically nothing involving individual initiative is heard in any context throughout his years in the colony.

On March 20, 1515, two caravels arrived from Spain—the two which had been kept behind to be lead-sheathed against shipworm.² They brought provisions, which the King had suggested be used to supply an expedition to the Pacific, and a number of new residents, among them the dean of the cathedral, Juan Pérez de Zalduondo. The dean arrived complete with a sister, a brother-in-law, a sister-in-law, two legitimate nieces and one illegitimate one, a housekeeper, nine criados and servants, and a bachiller of unspecified profession. Yet his coming went practically unnoted, eclipsed by that of Balboa's brevets as Adelantado of the Pacific coast and Governor of Panamá and Coiba.

Save for one all-important detail, to be noted later, the decrees represented a spectacular reward. Balboa was given a gobernación of known wealth and indefinite extent, for while Coiba was defined on three sides (Panamá, the crest of the range above Veragua, and the Pacific Ocean) no one knew the farther limit of a country of which the very name suggested an ever-receding border. His powers were to be the same as had been bestowed on Nicuesa and Hojeda, including the administration of justice, both civil and criminal, and complete liberty of appointment of subordinate officers. It was even stated that he could remove any captains, alcaldes, or the like who might have been already installed in his territory, and eject any residents he considered undesirable. The appointment was to be effective at once and "for as long as is our pleasure."

The decree naming Balboa "Adelantado of the coast of the South Sea which he discovered" was a creation rather than an appointment, for it was valid for life. The title was associated with frontier provinces and constituted an honor in addition to an administrative post; technically the powers conferred were exactly the same as those of a governor who was also chief justice.³ The brevet specified that Balboa was to enjoy the same emoluments and powers as other adelantados in Spain or in the Indies, "with all the honors, favors, exemptions

and liberties, pre-eminences, prerogatives and immunities" connected with the office. The special solemnity of the nomination was emphasized by the final part of the decree, which put it in the category of a brevet of ennoblement (and which also gives an insight into protocol and precedence in Castile):

And I command the most Illustrious Prince my very dear and beloved grandson and son, and the princes of the church, and the dukes, marquises, counts, grandees, masters of the [knightly] orders, priors, comedadores and subcomendadores, wardens and seneschals; and the members of our Council, presidents and vidores of our Audiencias, alcaldes, alguaciles of our palace and court and chancery; and all city administrators, mayors, alguacil judges, regidores, caballeros, escuderos, officials and worthy men of all the cities and towns and places of the said Indies, that they keep and fulfill this grace which I bestow on you . . . and cause it to be kept and fulfilled in each and every respect exactly as here set forth and that they neither transgress nor neglect, nor allow to be transgressed or neglected, the tenor and form of it in any manner whatsoever.

Apparently Balboa's triumph could not have been more brilliant and complete. But there remained that detail mentioned above, doubtless inserted at the instance of Fonseca, which nullified in effect the benefits conferred. It stipulated that all was to be subject to the superior authority of Pedrarias.

Nicuesa and Hojeda had been subordinate to Colón in the same way, with unfortunate results. But at least they had contracts which established the practical side of their commissions, such as the number of men they could recruit, and from where. And whereas Colón was nearly as hostile to Nicuesa and Hojeda as was Pedrarias to Balboa, he did not have them directly under his thumb. It was true that the King, in addition to ordering the officials, and especially Puente, to assist Balboa in every way, sent unequivocal instructions to the Governor:

I command and charge you, that in what concerns the said office as in every other thing in which the said Vasco Núñez may apply to you, you treat him and favor him and look after him as someone who has also served us, and in such manner that he recognizes in

you the will I have to favor him . . . and you must give him full liberty in the things of his gobernación so that he does not lose time coming to consult things with you, notwithstanding that I have ordered that his appointment be subordinate to your gobernación, for I very much prefer that he should undertake this than that it be done by anyone else . . . and it will be most desirable that the good treatment you give Vasco Núñez be seen, for thus people will have a more apt will to serve us . . .

The immediate reaction of Pedrarias and the officials was sufficient indication of how the sovereign's intentions would be carried out. They impounded all the cédulas on arrival, and determined to keep them from Balboa. As usual, the secret leaked. The Bishop and Balboa talked loudly about tampering with the mails and barefaced violation of the rights of free vassals. The Bishop delivered a sermon on the iniquity of intercepting royal cédulas. Not only were the liberties of free subjects infringed, he declared, but those of the King himself.

Thus harried, Pedrarias announced that he would call the officials to meet in council, show them "part of the cédulas," and put the question of their delivery to Balboa to the vote. It was a long and stormy session. Puente and his echo, Márquez, declared themselves against giving the dispatches to Balboa until the King could be informed on his misdeeds and the residencia be concluded. Tavira said he was not lettered in the law, and would vote with the majority. Espinosa said it was only right that His Highness should first know the results of the residencia and the opinions of the Governor and the officials. At this point the Bishop arose to flay them all.

The King, said Quevedo, had clearly stated his reasons for the privileges granted, and he knew all about Balboa when he did it. If the royal conscience had decided that this was what should be done, and the Governor and officials out of passion and envy prevented it, they would be guilty of something very close to treason. Oviedo, who was taking the minutes, says that the Bishop enlarged considerably on this theme; he certainly succeeded in scaring Pedrarias. The Governor hastily declared that Quevedo was right; he would vote to give the brevets to Balboa. The others unwillingly fell into line, and around midnight the votes were duly recorded. Vasco Núñez was to receive the cédulas next day.

There are, however, various ways to kill a cat. Pedrarias acknowledged the appointments, but blandly declared that no one had told him to provide Balboa with men and supplies; unfortunately it was quite impossible for him to spare any of his own troops, or even to allow the recruitment of baquiano volunteers. He suggested that Balboa should make the entrada to Dabaibe instead. Puente did his part by confiscating a 200-peso bar of gold which, duly taxed and registered, Balboa wanted to send to Hispaniola to purchase equipment, and Espinosa (who seems to have already moved over to the government side) collaborated by condemning Balboa and the former council to pay 1,565,568 maravedís, 22 pesos of pearls, and 8 pesos of guanín "owed to the Crown."⁴ At the same time the Governor hurriedly dispatched various of his captains on entradas to the Pacific coast. His cousin and favorite criado, Gaspar de Morales, accompanied by a relative of Doña Isabel named Peñalosa, Francisco Pizarro, and ninety-three men, was sent via the Trepadera to Balboa's eastern territory, with instructions to reach the Pearl Islands at all costs. Gonzalo de Badajoz was sent with a hundred men to the gobernación of Panamá and Coiba, and a few days later another baquiano colonist, Luis de Mercado, went after him with fifty more.⁵

Pedrarias was particularly incensed over the loss of Coiba, surnamed on the basis of its repute "the Rich." Ponquiaco's indications had been supplemented with tales of fantastic kingdoms "to the west," of cities magnificent with palaces and temples built of stone, and of peoples so civilized that they wrote books in their own characters. To be deprived *de jure* if not *de facto* of so glorious a prize was intolerable. Neither Balboa's protests nor the Bishop's pointed criticism in and out of the pulpit could move the Governor an inch from his angry defiance of the sovereign's wishes.

When one of the two lead-sheathed caravels—*La Consolación*, master, Andrés Niño—sailed for Hispaniola on May third, she carried, in addition to a quantity of letters from interested parties, several people who were bent on making personal reports designed to enable them to rise to better things on steppingstones of their vanquished rivals. One was Colmenares, who went officially as procurador of the colony with a formidable list of petitions, and semiofficially on behalf of the combined anti-Balboa elements; another was Fray Diego de

Torres, more or less representing the Bishop. The third was Oviedo, representing himself, but filled with projects to inform the King unfavorably about everyone except his friend Enciso. He carried letters and reports, as well as 3000 pesos of "private" gold (which indicates that some residents of Castilla del Oro had done nicely), and left as his *locum tenens* the ex-lieutenant of Nicuesa, Alonso Núñez de Madrid.

Balboa sent three letters: one, about "what has occurred since the Governor arrived, very long, like a report" (not extant); one in which he complained of (a) the still-continuing *residencia*, in which—hoist with his own petar—he was not allowed counsel, and by which he had been condemned to pay, in unjust fines and damages, more than he had in the world; (b) Pedrarias' refusal to lend him men, and the substitute *entrada* to Dabaibe; (c) the commandeering of his houses, which was equivalent to depriving him of 500 pesos a year in income; and (d) the confiscation of the gold he wished to send to Hispaniola. The third letter is all about his appointments and the difficulty in acting on them. Even as known in the secretarial résumé it has a simple force:

He says that by the two caravels which arrived at the port of that city on March 20, he received the brevets of the offices which Your Highness bestowed on him, and for such great mercedes as Your Highness has granted him he kisses the royal hands, and entreats Your Highness that since you have been good enough to grant them, Your Highness should maintain him in them, giving him the favor and help he will need henceforth. . . . He presented them to Pedrarias before a notary, and he acknowledged them and answered that in so far as carrying them out was concerned, the decrees were nothing to do with him, nor did they command that he give [Balboa] troops. . . . And from what he can see, they are determined not to facilitate him, for if they were [disposed to do so], of the thousand men there are in the city they could give him the hundred he has asked for to pacify the chiefs and to find out where settlements could be made and the temper of the land. For that matter, they could have given him the hundred men whom the Governor sent to those provinces of Panamá and Coiba after the brevets came from Your Highness, and after whom he sent another fifty, and another eighty to a hundred who have gone to

that coast. . . . He begs Your Highness to command that a cédula be given that he can take up to a hundred and fifty men of those who want to go of their own will, of those who were there before the armada went, and that they can take their naborias. And because he will be in debt from the residencia, he beseeches Your Highness to order that he be not detained, and the same for some of those who want to go with him who have debts. . . . He also begs that Your Highness give him license to take two hundred men from Hispaniola; for he says that now there are many available because of the [new] repartimiento, because many have been left without Indians and would go very willingly, without it costing Your Highness anything, as those who are now [in Darién] cost, which seems to him too much. He says that it would be desirable for Your Highness to command that someone go from Hispaniola to find out about everything in [Castilla del Oro] and about the injuries and robbery and killing of chiefs and Indians that have been committed without excuse, and also to verify the accounts of those who have had charge of the Crown property.

The Bishop wrote in more energetic terms, while Corral—now named assistant to Espinosa—gave Colmenares a smoking epistle in which he denounced not only Balboa, but his new chief and even Pasamonte. But the Governor and the officials sedulously avoided the whole subject of brevets and, of course, of methods of circumventing them. They reported the arrival of the caravels (no mention of dispatches); the failure of the attempted settlements (all Balboa's fault; they had been founded on his advice); Becerra's fortunate entrada to the Gulf of San Miguel and Gusmán's return with 20,000 pesos of gold; the unreasonableness of Indians who asserted they could not be held as slaves because they had not heard the Requirement as commanded, while making it impossible to seize them or their gold unless they were assaulted by surprise; and other things of minor interest. They announced that they had sent out other captains with four hundred men and mining equipment—destination not specified—and that Becerra, with a force of a hundred and fifty men, had now gone to look for the mines of Turufí and Mocrí.

From other documentary reference it would appear that Becerra's troops were included in the first figure of four hundred expeditionaries. Sometime in May another hundred and twenty left under the com-

mand of Francisco de Vallejo, in Becerra's support. The plan of campaign was for both to start overland from Urabá, Becerra via Cenú and Vallejo via the River of Nets; having joined forces at Turufí and/or Mocrí (the true location of which was by then more or less established), they would there found a fortified settlement. The undertaking was important enough to have dissuaded Becerra from an ambition to go back in search of the rich, black cannibals of Birú—which, as it turned out, was a pity.

On April thirtieth the caravel which had taken Becerra to Urabá returned. Her crew reported that the expedition had landed at El Aguada, close to the site of Hojeda's San Sebastián, and almost at once had had a skirmish with defending Indians. Since it was supplied with "three cannon firing lead shot larger than an egg," twenty-five arquebusiers, and forty crossbowmen, so as to be able to fight effectively while out of range of poisoned arrows, the encounter was brief. In the capital village Becerra had found stone crucibles, anvils, and other gold-working equipment, and although some captives assured him that the Spaniards might as well turn back because the Indians would die rather than reveal the mines, he had confidence that he was well able to carry out his assignment, and had marched his men off in the general direction of Cenú. It was the last authentic news that was ever received of the entrada.

As for Vallejo, he was back a few weeks later with a part of his men, 3300 pesos of gold, and a stain on his reputation that was never forgotten. He had gone twenty leagues inland, up the River of Nets, and met disaster from a combined offensive of nature and the Indians. The river rose in flood, some of the canoes capsized, and Vallejo turned to run for safety with the gold, leaving fifty to seventy of his men behind—some already dead, and the rest calling for help as they clung to trees or drift while the Indians closed in on them. The punishment inflicted on him was to suspend him from the rank of captain.

A month later, with the expeditions to the Pacific still unheard from and no hope of present profit from his gobernación, Balboa left to try and reach Dabaibe.

XXIV

BALBOA'S expedition to Dabaibe failed. It was an inexpensive, unavoidable failure, mild compared to others already experienced, although it was enough to rejoice Pedrarias and the officials. It was not even heroic; Balboa was not vanquished by hosts of Caribs in fierce combat. He was defeated by locusts. In all the middle and lower Atrato basin the cropland had been stripped clean; expeditions lived off the country, and there was not enough food to keep the men alive.

The entrada started late in July 1515, with a hundred and ninety men, in two bergantines, a boat, and eleven canoes. Luis Carrillo was sent as second-in-command, and one gathers that most of the expeditionaries were armada men. Balboa told the story to the King, in a letter which shows how intensive practice of the art of correspondence was improving his style.

Without special incident the flotilla reached and entered the River of Dabaibe and there, at the first small (and deserted) hamlet, the flotilla was left while the expedition proceeded by land. The Río Sucio is not navigable in the dry season. Balboa found the capital village of Dabaibe empty of Indians or treasure. He attributed this to fear born of the cruelty wrought by another captain (Vallejo?) in the land of a chief named Cuquirí, at only two days' march from Dabaibe, but it is probable that the destruction of the crops, rather than that of Cuquirí, was to blame. After a fruitless wait of ten days the expeditionaries returned to the Atrato.

Balboa was in a quandary:

If I wanted to explore the interior I had to leave sixty or seventy men to guard the boats, and they had nothing to eat nor any place where they could get it, so that perforce they would have had to leave the boats unprotected in order to go to search for food or else go in them to Darién, and the latter was the more probable . . . [thus] we left to go up the big river to look for food so as to have a place where we could leave the boats and from

there explore the interior. Going up river we agreed that the greater part of the troops should go to a province called Ibebeyva [Abibaibe] and that I should go up river to take a village of fisherfolk which was two days' journey from there. We made our way up river, Luis Carrillo going in one canoe and I in another, with two more canoes; we were altogether about fifty men.

And as luck would have it, on the way there came out against us seven or eight canoes of Indian fighting men, and as the Christians, especially those who have recently come from Castile, are unable to balance themselves well in these canoes, the Indians were able to give us battle with their war clubs so that before we could defend ourselves they had wounded thirty men, many of them with four or five wounds. And me they wounded in the head, so severely that I was in serious danger; now I am well, God be thanked. And they made us lose the canoe in which I was traveling, because we could not manage to reach land and were forced to abandon it. That in which Luis Carrillo was going and the other two were able to make land and there they defended themselves. It was God's will that they gave Luis Carrillo a blow across the chest from which he died as soon as we got back here [to Santa María] and two other men [were killed]. And after this happened we returned with much difficulty to where the other people were, and found them in great want of provisions and with no way of getting any. And seeing how few supplies there were in that whole country by reason of the locusts, we all, the captains and good men who went with me, agreed to turn back, because at that time there was no sustenance whatever, and had we endeavored to go farther it might happen that the greater part of troops for starvation would not return here at all.¹

The expedition was once more in Darién less than a month after it left. It was freely rumored that the Governor had foreseen failure (which may be true) and that he had hoped Balboa would be lost—which is credible only in so far as it expressed a constant and particular aspiration. Pedrarias, however much he wanted to be rid of Balboa, could not have wished to be deprived of nearly two hundred of his men, to say nothing of Luis Carrillo. However, there is no doubt that he was delighted to have a pretext for belaboring Balboa. The fact that it could not stand up to analysis, and much less to comparisons, did not deter the Governor and the officials from using it, *ad nauseam*.² Their attitude would have been peculiar even had every

other entrada been smoothly successful. In view of the record, and their truly remarkable faculty for condoning and concealing everything from criminal negligence to mayhem and massacre by other captains, it is almost comic.

How far Pedrarias and his colleagues could go in the opposite direction—that of accessories before and after the fact—was illustrated at exactly the same time that they were pouncing on Balboa's negative results with the enthusiasm of ratting terriers on an undersized mouse. The case was that of the Governor's relatives, Morales and Peñalosa.

Morales covered all the ground traversed by Becerra, and succeeded in reaching and subduing the Pearl Islands. He brought back nearly four thousand pesos of gold and guanín, some slaves, and ninety-five marcos of pearls, among them one of surpassing size and beauty, together with the promise of a yearly tribute from Chief Toé of Terarequí (Balboa's Isla Rica, now called Isla del Rey) of fifty pounds of pearls. On this showing he had done well—and this, with the dubious merit of having caused the chief to be baptized out of hand with the name of Pedrarias, was all that ever appeared in official reports. The part that was deleted went beyond the routine story of surprise attack, slaving, destruction, rapine, rape, and betrayal of native friendship, or the loss as a result of these activities of nearly half the expeditionaries. Morales' particular distinction was the systematic murder of his chained captives, the majority of whom were beheaded or beaten to death in successive lots so that the vengeful Indians who were harrying the return march should be delayed to mourn and bury their dead.

The following is from the account of Casas, who was particularly well posted on this entrada.⁸

Morales embarked for the Pearl Islands at the mouth of the Tuíra, in canoes provided by Chief Tutibra. He left a detachment on the mainland under Peñalosa, with instructions to work around the eastern side of the Gulf to Chochama, where the seagoing section of the expedition would meet them. While Morales was conducting successful, and not particularly severe, operations in Terarequí, the Peñalosa contingent ran wild; by the time Morales got back to the mainland, the outraged Indians—Becerra's friendly hosts—were keyed to venge-

ance. When Morales sent a party of eleven *compañeros* to contact Peñalosa, they were fallen upon in the village of Chochama and killed. Word of this came promptly to Chief Chiruca, who was with Morales, and Chiruca as promptly fled; recaptured and put to torture, he revealed everything. Morales then forced him to summon all the chieftains of the region, one by one, to receive "an important communication." Eighteen came, and as each arrived he was seized and bound. At this point Peñalosa turned up; the united force fell on the leaderless natives, slaughtered seven hundred of them, and concluded by killing the eighteen captives plus Chiruca.

This done, a raid was made to Birú, where a day-long battle was won thanks to "the dog." ("The dog," a regiment in himself, sounds uncomfortably like Leoncico. Let us hope that resentment kept Balboa from hiring him out to this entrada: dogs were the chief executioners of the captive chieftains.) The Spaniards felt, however, that it was only a temporary victory, and they turned back toward the coast—only to meet the reorganized subjects of the murdered chiefs. A week of fighting followed, at the end of which the expeditionaries made a futile attempt to get away unseen by night. They must have taken to the woods; at any rate, they wandered lost for nine days, always hounded by the avenging Indians. This was when they hit on the scheme of serial massacre of their prisoners. On the ninth day they found themselves at the place from which they had started.

This time they tried the Gulf shore, stumbling through jungle growth, wading or swimming in the coastal marshes, "going more like hunted beasts than men." Morales got lost, and for three days they searched vainly for him with some canoes they found; he was later located by a man on a raft. At length rather more than half of them won through to the Tuíra and, via Careta, to Darién.⁴ The date of their return to Santa María was August tenth.

The auctions of Morales' pearls were held on August thirteenth and nineteenth, and on September second. They show some curious results, not the least intriguing of which is that only 871 pesos' weight of pearls was accounted for. Balboa, who evidently knew only what the public auction revealed, gives this as the sum of Morales' booty in pearls. But in official reports it is stated more than once that it came to 95 marcos, and 95 marcos is 4750 pesos.⁵ Thirty-two selected

specimens weighing eight pesos were set aside for the quinto, but the big pearl, which should have gone for its official valuation to the King,⁶ was sold for 1200 pesos gold to a merchant, who resold it next day to Pedrarias. All the others entered in the records were purchased, together with an odd lot from another entrada, by the Governor's criado, Diego Maldonado—seven and a half *pounds* of pearls for 140 pesos, plus nearly a third of a pound of choice ones for 78 pesos. It was remarked that when Pedrarias or his friends were bidding, other prospective buyers retired. The great pearl—flawless, lustrous, pear-shaped, and weighing over 31 carats—was later sold with another squarish one by Doña Isabel to the Empress for 900,000 maravedís. Famous among the Crown jewels as "The Orphan" or "The Unique," it was lost two centuries later when the palace of Madrid was destroyed by fire.

In September and October Pedrarias and the officials concocted a new and rather grandiose scheme to steal Balboa's gobernación. It was not, of course, presented in these terms to the King. Although they wrote plenty of concomitant criticism of Balboa, their concrete proposal so carefully omitted any direct reference to him that it might have been supposed that as Their Highnesses' adelantado and governor of the Pacific coast he had never existed. Considering that their plan was to substitute Diego Albítez for the King's thrice-confirmed appointee, it was omission to the nth power; Fernando, had he lived to see it, might have found even his monumental patience unequal to the strain.

Santa María del Antigua was a capital, and conformed to the pattern established for such places: nothing was as simple as it seemed, and very little was aboveboard. The Albítez project was a case in point. For one thing, it was concealed at the time from Balboa and Quevedo—one of the few, if not the only, official secret that (temporarily) escaped the Bishop. For another, it would appear that Pedrarias, while he knew and approved it, was either unaware of how far it went, or rather tepid in his support. It was, in fact, Puente's baby. The Treasurer undoubtedly envisaged a return which would make his normal pickings look very small beer, but his motives were not entirely mercenary. He had developed a vicious antipathy for

Balboa which it was a pleasure to satisfy. This, it was said, was the result of one of Balboa's more naïve ideas, which prompted him to dun for some gold which Puente had "borrowed" from him never dreaming that the polite fiction of a loan would be taken with vulgar literality. It has been remarked that Balboa was short on diplomacy.

The plan was this: Albítez would be given a sufficient force, and supplies for which the officials would advance a thousand pesos immediately. He would establish two settlements, one on the Atlantic and the other on the Pacific, either on a Careta-Gulf of San Miguel axis or a Nombre de Dios-Panamá one. The settlements would be victualed for six months or a year and equipped and provided with seed and domestic animals from the Crown hacienda at cost and on credit, with a year or two to pay. At the Pacific, Albítez would build ships, using rigging and other materials issued to him from the government stores in Santa María. Then, while one half of his men remained to grow crops and look for mines, Albítez would go with the other half to explore the coast westward for "two or three hundred leagues" or as far as was convenient. If this direction proved unprofitable or dangerous, he would return, build another two thirty-tonel ships, and undertake exploration eastward. And here came the crowning grandeur: he would sail "eastward to cross the equinoctial line"—not to reach the Inca Empire, which was still unguessed, but to circumnavigate the mainland until he reached Cape San Agustín on the Atlantic. He would establish the Southern Passage from Spain to the Pacific.

It cannot be denied that Albítez and Puente thought big, even if they did not quite realize how big. The voyages could not be undertaken without the King's consent, but meanwhile it was planned to put the first part of the scheme into effect, so that "if His Highness be pleased to make use of Diego Albítez . . . when [the formalities] are concluded, the settlements will be already begun, and someone will be named to go on with them without taking command of them away from Diego Albítez, since he made the beginning and the offer." At this point Pedrarias entered the picture. It is difficult to say whether he did so as an accomplice or a dupe; possibly he was something of both.

The Governor had at last decided to lead an expedition in person. His announced purpose was to punish the rebel tribes of Comogre,

Pocorosa, and Tubanamá, and to select sites for settlements not only on the Caribbean but on the coast of the South Sea. Balboa received strict orders to remain in Santa María until the expedition got back—in other words, until invasion of his gobernación had been pinned down with colonization.

Relations between the top functionaries, and their individual behavior, can be considered normal at this period. That is, they were self-seeking, unprincipled, and hypocritical. Puente promoted the Governor's entrada because it served his ends, while writing to Castile that the Governor was incapable of doing his job and should be recalled. Pedrarias made Espinosa second-in-command of his expedition not because he favored him—he had just dispatched a letter in which his reference to the alcalde mayor might be termed a torpedo—but in order to get him out of Santa María and install the bachiller Corral as acting chief justice. Corral, for his part, was sufficiently friendly and correct with Espinosa to get confirmation as his locum tenens, and at the same time accused his chief in letters to Spain of bias and corruption. The Treasurer joined the others in seconding a petition from Juan de Tavira for permission to explore the Atrato, and in separate letters proffered detailed charges against him of embezzlement. And Pedrarias, while penning almost hysterical diatribes against Vasco Núñez, himself admitted that he dissembled with him in view of the King's commands.

In this company, Balboa—a naturally poor dissembler—was at something of a disadvantage. But he did what he could. He wrote letters unflinchingly which, Pedrarias said, he basely smuggled past the interception plotted for them to Pasamonte for forwarding to Spain. And these communications, at first guarded in direct references to the Governor, became avowedly hostile. The long epistle addressed to the King and dated October 26, 1515, is a fortunately preserved example. After going over the ground covered in previous letters and bringing events up to date with the latest entradas, after lamenting the failure to send a qualified investigator and predicting that at the present rate Castilla del Oro would soon be past saving, Balboa gave a thumbnail sketch of Pedrarias.

“With regard to the Governor, although he is a distinguished personage, Your Highness knows that he is very old to serve in these

parts," he began with deceptive mildness, "and he suffers greatly from a serious illness so that he has never been well for a single day since he came here." Thenceforth, genteel intimations were cast to the winds:

He is an excessively hasty man; he is a man who does not much care even if half the troops are lost on the expeditions. He has never punished the destruction and killings done in the entradas both to chiefs and Indians. He has refrained from punishing thefts of gold and pearls which the captains have very obviously stolen in the entradas; there was one captain who gave six hundred pesos of the stolen loot he brought, and nothing more was said about it. It is not known why this captain, and others, have been allowed to go to Castile; their thefts were publicly discussed. We have seen many times that if any of the men who accompanied the captains in the entradas complained of them, they intimidated him in such fashion that no one else dared to complain. [Pedrarias] is a person who is delighted to see discord between people, and if there is none he creates it, speaking ill of one to the other; this vice he has to a very great extent. He is a man who, absorbed in his profit-getting and greed, does not remember that he is Governor or occupy himself with anything else; because it matters nothing to him whether the whole world be lost or won, just as if he were not Governor.

More counsel than he possesses is needed in the things of the gobernación and colonization of the country, yet if one gives it to him he believes that it is in order to deceive him. He gives small heed to anyone unless it be someone from whom he understands he will have some gain; often he has shown himself most avaricious and harsh with the regidores because they told him something that was to Your Highness' service and the commonweal of the republic, and the same with whatever person contradicts him in anything. Concerning the things of Your Highness' estate, of a truth he takes little care, nor does he much remember it.

He is a man ruled by all envy and covetousness in the world. He is inordinately sorry to see that there is friendship between worthy people. He likes to see and hear confabulation and gossip of one side and the other. He is a man who much more readily gives credence to bad things than to good ones or to people who could help him. He is a person without any organization or any knack or talent for the business of the gobernación; he is a man who clearly

shows that he holds all Your Highness' service and his own honor as subordinate and forgotten if he can make a peso profit.

And so as not to be more prolix, I refrain from informing Your Royal Highness of an infinity of other things which consist in his bad disposition and which are inadmissible in a person who has such a great responsibility and who must rule and govern so many and such honorable people. I beseech Your Highness, so that I be not put in the position of a slanderer, that you command that information be taken from all the people who go from these regions, and Your Highness will clearly see the truth of everything I have said.

This, it must be admitted, was quite a creditable exercise in denigration. It was balanced and to spare by a contemporaneous effort by Pedrarias. This forms the second section of a document of which the first part is the copy of a letter to the King. The letter expounds reasons for revoking the grants made to Balboa; it cleverly avoids the personal issue, puts the whole argument on a lofty plane of national interest, and is neither undignified nor altogether groundless. The second part is a memorandum instructing an unnamed agent—believed to have been Enciso—what he is to say when he gets to Court. It has a kind of breathless venom which, in conjunction with a faintly plaintive final paragraph, suggests that Balboa had become more effective in his countermeasures than events would indicate.

In the letter Pedrarias pointed out that Balboa's gobernación was ill-defined and consequently far too big. What with the extensible nature of Coiba and a certain ambiguity in the wording of the brevet as adelantado, it might be interpreted to comprise the entire Pacific coast; even between the minimum north-south boundaries established—the crest of the Veragua range and the South Sea—there lay seventy leagues of land (a very free estimate) and innumerable provinces. Thus the King was tying up an enormous and superlatively rich territory, thereby discouraging exploration and preventing its exploitation. It was—said Pedrarias cannily—exactly the sort of thing which had caused all the trouble with Colón. At most, Balboa should receive only that section of the coast which he had personally discovered. Even this was much more than he deserved since “according to my information,” Pedrarias wrote, producing an unconvincingly stuffed

rabbit, "he who really discovered the South Sea and spent his money and property in so doing was, so they say, Diego de Nicuesa."

The appended memorandum has a fine spontaneity:

What must be said about Vasco Núñez is his character, and how it is public and notorious that he does not know how to speak the truth, nor to resent or take offense at being taxed with anything wrong that he has done, of whatever nature it may be; that he has no love or good will for any worthy person, but likes to converse and be intimate with people of low degree. That he is most excessively avaricious; covets greatly any good thing possessed by another; is very cruel and disagreeable; never forgives; never submits to any advice; has no self-control nor can use any to resist any vicious appetite; is very mercenary; has neither obedience nor reverence for the Church and her ministers; is of most evil conscience; is always set on tricking the person with whom he converses, when one asks counsel of him he gives it contrariwise. That he is very determined to procure, by fair means or foul, to be superior to what he was [already] trying to be, by confederations and combines and by any other means he finds handy even if it be contrary to all loyalty and service owed to God and Their Highnesses.

All this and many other things you must prove by the secret inquiry, and by the residencia sent to Court, and by the [records of the] investigations which were made in secret, one taken by Pedrarias [the Nephew] and the other taken by Arriaga about the expedition to Dabaibe. You must try to discover where these are and if they have been considered and what has been done about them.

Toward the end of the memorandum Pedrarias loses the first fine sweep of invective, and relies more on his agent's inventiveness ("for these offenses and many more which you can describe as an eyewitness . . . for reason which you, as an observer will relate . . ."). Vasco Núñez, even if he were not so objectionable, was ineligible for such great *mercedes*, which should go to someone of higher category and more loyal services. Now definitely weakening, the Governor then blames his failure to maintain the new settlements, or to found others, on Balboa, who had perfidiously advised making them in regions which he knew were sterile and profitless, "because that land confined with the land where he hoped to get the grant of the gobernación, and in order that what I did should not endure." Every time he, Pedrarias,

tried to send captains to the South Sea, Balboa interposed protests and injunctions, "attracting everyone he could to his side and stirring them to indignation with me"; unable himself to profit by his gobernación, he knavishly embarrassed the Governor's efforts to filch it from him, "by cabals and with the pretense of asking for justice, whereas he himself is accused of many crimes and excesses and faults." If in his present reduced circumstances he behaved so—Pedrarias asked with looking-glass logic—"what would he have done if he had been given possession and charge of his grants?

"You must demand, to remedy the aforesaid, that it be expressly commanded that sentence be executed on him—or that it be ordered that he be pardoned [not, one may note, acquitted] and that his accusers and creditors give up asking for justice. Because until I know what Their Highnesses command on this and what their pleasure is, I do not intend to allow the said Vasco Núñez to leave this city where I keep him detained because of the said crimes."

Whoever the recipient of these instructions may have been, he was a careless soul, or he would have swallowed them before he allowed them to get into the archives. The fact that they were preserved in the form of a remorseless gloss on the Governor's careful letter, and in the same file with Balboa's letter of October twenty-sixth, is significant. When these communications were received, Castile was being governed by Chancellor Cardinal Cisneros as regent for the absent Carlos.

The more Pedrarias' consuming hatred of Balboa is considered, the more unbalanced it appears. After all, he had practically unlimited territory at his disposal without the South Sea gobernación. He could put settlements anywhere he liked along a thousand miles of coast, and extend operations from them a thousand miles inland. And while he stood bristling over Tierra Firme like a dog with an unmanageable bone, he was also trying to find an excuse to go to Castile. Somehow, one cannot help thinking of Doña Isabel, thirty years or more younger than her ailing husband, "who agreed well with Vasco Núñez, and he had devoted himself a great deal to pleasing her and serving her."

What with one thing and another, in fact, Balboa had done rather better than the circumstances appeared to allow. A hundred baquianos were ready and eager to follow him, and quite a number of armada

men would have been glad to join them. In November there was a brief and noisy crisis which gave him a last push toward some action which would force the issues. Tavira, who had been having trouble with Puente, tipped off the Bishop about the project to put Albítez in command of Balboa's gobernación. Quevedo was outraged, and for twenty-four hours something like a civil war threatened. It was Balboa who averted the trouble—one of the least remarked, and most admirable, instances of his essential integrity. But he arranged to send secretly to Hispaniola for volunteers to serve under him.

The recruiting agent was Garabito, financed, one imagines, by the Bishop and recommended to Pasamonte. How they managed to ship him off without anyone getting word of the scheme is not explained, but it is easy to see why they thought it would work. Pedrarias was leaving for what promised to be a protracted expedition, and in his absence the Bishop would be acting Governor.

XXV

PREPARATIONS for Pedrarias' maiden entrada included installation of the Bishop as acting Governor and of Corral as acting alcalde mayor, bestowal of Careta in encomienda on Lope de Olano, who went ahead to pave the way for the expedition, and the fashioning of a golden chain for the Governor weighing two and a third pounds, "in order that the Indians may see the authority of his person." Also, two resolutions were rushed through a week before Pedrarias left. One empowered him to use his own judgment in distributing loot; the other awarded one first-class lot in the proceeds from all entradas to each official and to the alcalde mayor. The resolutions were the result of authorizations received from the King three days before.

The King's permits were not supposed to have anything to do with official premiums and perquisites. That concerning the division of loot was in the spirit of the laws of Castile, which regulated each soldier's share according to a minutely graduated scale based on the individual's rank and equipment, and was given in answer to Pedrarias'

representation of the drawbacks to the system of equal shares now that expeditions were more complex.¹ The Governor was enjoined to see that the distribution was fairly carried out, "so that nothing whatever lie upon our conscience." The other permission, on which the officials leaned when voting themselves bonuses, had also been solicited by Pedrarias. It allowed modification or suspension of the King's original instructions, when, by unanimous decision of the Governor and his colleagues, such action was deemed necessary for the welfare and safety of the colony. It was to be invoked only in cases where the delay in referring the matter to Spain would be dangerous or prejudicial.

As an emergency measure, since consultation with the home authorities was normally impossible in anything under a year or so, this second authorization was theoretically sound. Also theoretically, the fact that the responsibility of government was shared by five men—representing the Crown, the Church, and the Casa de Contratación—appeared to be a safeguard against its misuse. In practice it was a *carte blanche*. So long as the functionaries hung together they could do very much as they liked. It is not surprising that their efforts to remove the inconvenient Bishop from their midst were immediately intensified.

On November 30, 1515, Pedrarias sailed with his expedition: two hundred and fifty foot soldiers, twelve mounted officers and *escuderos*, two pilots, and three priests. An interesting newcomer to Santa María was also of the company: Messer Codro of Italy.

Codro was a renowned astronomer and philosopher, "a man of truly great erudition and humanity, and very wise and experienced in natural things, and who had traveled the greater part of the world." The irritatingly sparse references to him suggest he had come on his own initiative to make observations in the New World, but in view of the extreme difficulty, for a foreigner, of getting permission to go to the Indies and the King's efforts in late 1514 to secure the services of another Italian scientist named Marrunio, it is more likely that he had some kind of royal commission. He had made friends with Balboa, but he naturally seized the chance, presented by Pedrarias' *entrada*, to pursue his studies in new country.

In three caravels and a *bergantín* the expedition first crossed to

Urabá to see if something could be learned of Becerra. Balboa, who had considered Becerra's men to be weak and inexperienced and the tactics of the entrada to be badly conceived, had said from the start that they were sent "like cattle to the slaughterhouse." Information wrung from some captured Urabae bore out the prediction: Becerra and his men had been killed at a river crossing "as they came laden with gold." (A few days later the Indians of Careta told Espinosa that Becerra was living in peace and plenty with a chief of Cenú, but this was clearly only an effort to give satisfaction in a matter of which they knew nothing.) The story learned in Urabá was later confirmed by one or two naborias of the expedition who escaped the massacre. Casas says that it occurred at the Río Sinú just above the capital village; the Spaniards, already decimated in ambushes and running fights, were lured by the wily Cenues into crossing the river, and when half of them had gained the farther bank, the Indians fell on the divided force with terrible effect.

Pedrarias limited his action in Urabá to taking, and burning, a group of houses perched atop a small hill not far from the landing place. Three days later, after a stormy passage, he disembarked in the port of Careta. Proceeding inland to the principal village (most of the way on horseback), he found Olano comfortably installed and the chief, less comfortably, hiding out in the hills. Careta had fallen on evil days. There had been civil war between Chima and his brother, saco of the port, and, according to Andagoya, so many warriors had been killed that the site of the capital had been renamed Acla, signifying "bones of men." (Casas believed that Balboa bestowed the name in 1516, by which time there were Spanish bones to commemorate.) It may be guessed that Chima's death in 1514 had been violent; perhaps the brother murdered by Ayora in Comogre was the party of the second part. The chief now in power was really a regent, since Chima's heir was only thirteen years old; Pedrarias sent the boy, with a brother aged seven, to be educated by the Franciscans in Santa María.

After a little the chief-regent was induced to return and, in an impressive little ceremony which he probably found incomprehensible, to swear allegiance to the flag of Castile. His differences with the headman of the port were composed, and the Governor sweetened the

proceedings with a dinner "and much wine, which is what they like most."

At this point Pedrarias was taken with fever and a sharp recurrence of his malady. If, as Quevedo claimed, he was looking forward to the end of his *entrada* before it began, the excuse which presented itself was almost too valid. Pedrarias himself said he was at death's door; certainly he was very ill for a time, and a vesical fistula opened which never closed thereafter. Unable to continue his venture and unwilling to abandon it, he named Espinosa captain of the expedition, and sent it on its way late in December. The Governor remained to convalesce and supervise construction of a fort; about January twentieth he sailed for Santa María, leaving Olano to look after things in Careta.

(It is impossible to approve of Pedrarias, but one must admire his obstinate vitality. Strong young men went down like ninepins when they came to the Indies, but Pedrarias, nearly seventy, one arm crippled, subject to excruciating attacks of a constantly troublesome ailment, continued his ruthless career for sixteen years after his illness in Careta—scheming, perverse, and indomitable to the last breath.)

The Governor's return to Santa María was doubtless hastened by word from Puente, who was finding the Bishop hard to handle. Pedrarias was in the same case, and with his approval the Treasurer wrote a very long letter in an attempt to provoke recall of Quevedo. It was finished on January twenty-eighth, and obligingly underwritten by Márquez, but not by Tavira, who had been kept in the dark lest he tell the object of their attentions what was afoot. Puente took care of the factor in another report, accusing him of speculation in assorted forms: specifically, of using over 13,000 pesos in legitimate receipts and an undetermined amount in illegitimate ones for his personal speculations. Since Tavira, who had been penniless when he arrived in Castilla del Oro, had under pressure delivered 3000 pesos in August and another thousand in November (earmarked for Albítez), and after later handing over about 10,700 more was said to have 15,000 left for himself, it may be taken that Puente was right.

Bishop Quevedo—the officials wrote—was indifferent to his religious duties and a disrupting force in the colony. He was interfering; he pried into administrative affairs; he was domineering, passionate,

and intemperate in language. Instances followed: the time in San Lúcar, when Espinosa wanted to take an erring recruit from the sanctuary of the church, and was called "a heretical Jew"; the time in Gomera when, apropos of an incident between Pedrarias the Nephew and Francisco the Nephew (of the Contador), the Bishop spoke unpleasantly of Márquez from the pulpit; the time when, because the Governor canceled the delegation of powers given by reason of his illness for the excellent motive that Quevedo favored Balboa, the Bishop exclaimed, "What Jews' tricks are you playing on me? I am not a person to be treated in this way!" Then there were the times when his sermons "dishonored" the estimable people who were bringing charges and claims against Balboa; and those when, just because the officials forgot to tell him of some business, or because they politely reproved him, or because (having suddenly remembered an errand to be done) they left a meeting when he was speaking, he made rude remarks. Very particularly, there was that formidable row in November over the expedition to the South Sea—in other words, over the Pedrarias-Puente-Albítez project to snatch Balboa's gobernación.

According to Puente, the storm had begun in council, with irate protests from the Bishop, who, declaring that this sort of trickery was just what could be expected of Pedrarias, then rushed out into the plaza shouting, "Call, call the adelantado to me here—we'll see what swindles are going on!" Balboa joined Quevedo in the church, and succeeded in calming the irate prelate and persuading him to go home. The next move was made by Pedrarias: the arrest of all the men who had gathered with the Bishop. This, of course, brought Quevedo out again breathing fire; surrounded by a supporting and expectant crowd, he made for the Governor's house. The vecinos were not admitted, but through the flimsy walls they could listen to the violent interview which ensued. Puente quotes the culminating exchange, a singularly terse bit of dialogue:

QUEVEDO: I will take half your men, and they will follow me.

PEDRARIAS: I will chastise them.

QUEVEDO: I will go up to the church tower, to see to my part.

At this point, Puente says, the Governor remembered the doubtless fascinated audience outside and said no more. Both disputants must

have realized that they had gone too far. Things were patched up somehow, and although the mend was nearly as conspicuous as the rent, it held sufficiently to permit Pedrarias to leave.

Not long after, the Bishop, as judge of the Inquisition in Castilla del Oro, sent his own alguacil to arrest the Governor's surgeon, Maestre Enrique, who was a recently converted Jew. In view of the restrictions on passage of *conversos* to the Indies (save for merchants, who were often of Jewish extraction), it is curious that Maestre Enrique should have been engaged, but since he was Pedrarias' man, the officials hurried to speak with the Governor as soon as he returned to Santa María, hopeful that he would take strong action. Quick as they were, the Bishop had been before them, and his conversation had left Pedrarias disinclined to take up the new issue. Quevedo had been specifically invested with all the rights and powers of bishops in Spain, which included those of arrest, via their own constables, of presumed offenders against religion. (Pedrarias' own uncle had exercised the privilege freely, and had not hesitated to condemn his prisoners to the gallows.) Furthermore, since Quevedo doubled as Inquisitor of Castilla del Oro, he had a special authority, and he reminded the Governor that he could, and would, proceed against him if obstructed in the fulfillment of his sacred duties. This bit of blackmail was effective: Pedrarias' antecedents were not such as to invite a brush with the Holy Office. Without consulting Puente and Márquez—whose reactions he could foresee—he agreed that the Bishop should continue to use his powers, and his alguacil, at least until Espinosa could examine the question. What happened to the unfortunate pawn in the game, Surgeon Enrique, does not transpire.

The acrid pleasures of political feuding were interrupted in February by the return from Coiba of the expedition led by Badajoz. It was in sorry case. At least half of its men had been killed, and most of the spent survivors bore scars of battle.² What was worse, from the Governor's standpoint, it had lost much of the gold collected from chiefs on the outward journey—a treasure variously reported at figures from 30,000 to 140,000 pesos, according to the taste and convenience of the reporters.

Badajoz, it will be remembered, had been sent out from Santa María in April 1515, in such haste to forestall Balboa in his just-

notified gobernación that he had to wait in Nombre de Dios for the second section of his expedition to catch up with him. He had crossed the Isthmus by way of Juanaga, Chagre, and Capira,³ visited the island of Taboga, and then proceeded southwest along the coastal plain to Natá, where he rested before going on to Parisa, at the root of the Azuero Peninsula. Up to this point operations had been easy and lucrative. The natives of Coiba had never seen white men before, and in doubt as to their possibly godlike nature, did not dare to oppose them. The lord of Natá, a powerful chief by normal standards, but a singularly mild one, bore the evils of occupation with resignation, and when the Spaniards left with his wives and daughters as captives, limited himself to following them and pleading for their return. (After several miles of this, Badajoz threatened to kill him; the compañeros were amused at the comic figure he made, writhing prostrate and biting the ground in a frenzy of despair.) Even the extraordinary people of Escoria, so tall and handsome that they made the neighboring tribes look like dark-skinned dwarfs, gave no real trouble.

Chief Cutatara of Parisa was, therefore, a painful surprise. He was much more powerful than his neighbors—most of the Azuero Peninsula was vassal to him—and extremely wealthy. He was also proud. A year or so before, he had routed an army of cannibals from Nicaragua, who had advanced as far as the province adjoining his own and who, gustatory habits aside, curiously resembled the Spaniards as invaders. His riches and prestige had been much increased thereby, and although he preferred to avoid hostilities, he was quite prepared to deal with intruders from the east as he had with those from the west.

Cutatara's first move was to send ambassadors to meet Badajoz and ask him to turn back. Since the ambassadors brought a gift of gold amounting to 9000 pesos—offered, the chief said, with subtle insolence, "by his women"—the request was foredoomed to failure. Cutatara would probably have withstood invasion in any case, but the report of one of his ambassador-scouts—that he had been forced to lie all night on the floor while "a pious priest" occupied the hammock with his wife—combined with the fact that the wife in question was the chief's own sister, gave the opposition the vigor of outrage.

There are several versions of what ensued, but the nub of it is certain: while Badajoz advanced to attack the chief's village with

most of his troops, warriors of Parisa proceeded by another trail and fell upon the company which had been left to guard the accumulated gold. Badajoz learned of the assault and hurried back, but the battle which followed was a humiliating defeat for the Spaniards. Seventy men were killed, and the Indians made off with about two thirds of the expedition's treasure. Badajoz gave first aid to the severely wounded (treating them with fat from the fallen Indians, a sovereign remedy) and beat a hurried retreat. The return to Darién was harried by previously meek tribes who had learned what had happened; the last engagement was in Chepo, where Pérez de la Rúa was killed. In the circumstances, the fact that Badajoz still had courage to make a side trip to the island of Otoque, and that he came in with nearly two hundred pounds of gold and 2000 pesos' worth of slaves, must arouse a wry admiration.

As the depleted Badajoz expedition passed through Comogre along the *camino real* (every main trail was called the "royal road"), it established communication with the outgoing one of Espinosa, then encamped in Chimán. The alcalde mayor, stimulated by what was told him about Coiba and furnished with a guide by Badajoz—the indefatigable Alonso Martín de Don Benito—immediately decided that vengeance on the Bayano chieftains should be subordinated to a more lucrative one on Parisa. In March, Dean Juan Pérez arrived in Santa María from Chimán with letters from Espinosa announcing his intention to proceed at once to Coiba, and asking that reinforcements be sent after him.

The Governor had been thoroughly out of temper over the loss of Badajoz' booty, and he was much cheered at the prospect of its recovery. At this moment his pleased anticipation of skimming the cream off Balboa's territory in preparation for more leisurely exploitation received a shock. For two years he had insisted to Balboa that the reason he could not allow him to go to his gobernación was the unfortunate shortage of men in the colony. Now Andrés de Garabito turned up from Hispaniola and Cuba with sixty volunteers for the Adelantado's command.

Pedrarias was angrier than he had ever been in Darién. The fact in itself was disconcerting, and it was intolerable to think of the grinning comments of the *compañeros*: The Adelantado certainly put one

over on the Old Man this time; wonder how he thinks he'll get out of this one—no law against getting outside volunteers for your own gobernación! The Governor moved fast. The spurious amenity with which, he said, he cloaked his true feelings was already in tatters; casting the shreds to the winds, he had Balboa arrested on charges of conspiracy and attempted rebellion. The settlement was in an uproar. Pedrarias feared that the jail would be stormed to release his prisoner, in which case anything might happen. The remarkable forbearance Balboa had displayed in quieting the threatened uprising on his behalf in November might not hold out indefinitely; in November his public spirit had been encouraged by the presence of many of the Governor's men now away with Espinosa and by the absence of sixty now pledged only to his standard. Accordingly, Pedrarias had a cage constructed in the patio of his own house, and proceeded to keep Their Highnesses' Adelantado and Governor of the South Sea in it like a captive animal.

How long the absurd incarceration lasted is uncertain; perhaps not more than two months. It is possible that Pedrarias came to regret it as much as his prisoner: feeling against it was running high, and Vasco Núñez, in or out of a cage, could be a disturbing element in the home. When it ended, ostensibly in deference to the Bishop's interventions and Doña Isabel's persuasions, it was with a *volte face* which left observers dizzy and glassy-eyed.

The Governor did not merely release Balboa. He adopted him. To the startled colony the marriage was announced of María, daughter of Don Pedro Arias Dávila and Doña Isabel de Bobadilla y Peñalosa, and Adelantado Vasco Núñez de Balboa, Governor of the coast of the South Sea. The contract was signed before the Bishop. Either this in itself constituted a valid marriage ceremony, or it was supplemented by one of marriage by proxy, for although it is sometimes said that Balboa was never more than betrothed to María, and despite Pedrarias' later declaration that he had only promised to give his daughter to Balboa if no objection was raised by the King, Oviedo—who made a point of examining the records—states very definitely that “in the name of his daughter [the Governor] contracted marriage and gave his hand for her.” Thereafter, Pedrarias addressed Balboa as: “Son.”

The alliance was followed by an *asiento* authorizing Balboa to take

an expedition to his gobernación. More exactly, it authorized an eventual expedition to it, for the contract contained several jokers. It required Balboa to make a settlement in Acla before going to the Pacific, and it gave him only eighteen months in which to do everything. Also, he was allowed only eighty men inclusive of those brought by Garabito, although one hundred and thirty were dispatched to reinforce Espinosa in what was, after all, Balboa's concession.

It is true that someone was needed in Acla, which had just been razed by the goaded Caretans and endowed with more bones—specifically those of Lope de Olano and a dozen or more of his companions.⁴ Acla was the gateway to the passes, and aside from Pedrarias' idea of moving the government there, its security was a strategic necessity. Careta was no longer a safe and bountiful place for passing troops; it could be counted on as a base only if occupied and defended by a permanent garrison. And since a post there was especially important to Balboa if he were to operate anywhere around the Gulf of San Miguel, he probably preferred to see to it himself.

Eager to have done with the first part of his assignment before Espinosa got back, when more men would presumably be available for his own venture, Balboa rushed his preparations. About August twenty-fourth he embarked his small force and made for Acla.⁵

XXVI

THE arguments in favor of an alliance with Balboa, advanced by the Bishop and seconded by Doña Isabel, were undoubtedly valid. They are cited in the chronicles: Vasco Núñez, of illustrious lineage and already an adelantado, was eminently acceptable as a son-in-law; his capacities and prospects, suitably fostered, were such that for Pedrarias to keep them in the family would be tantamount to taking out insurance for his declining years; the quarrel with Balboa had been generally damaging and had now reached a point as threatening to the Governor as to his victim; the colony as well as the Throne would rejoice to see an end to dissension and stalemate. In short, adoption

of Vasco Núñez was one of those politically desirable solutions whereby self-interest can wear with grace the mantle of public service.

All this was true enough. But most of it had been equally true earlier; what the chronicles do not explain is why the moment seemed opportune to press it, or why, just when Pedrarias' animosity had reached fever pitch, the arguments were suddenly effective. The answer must be looked for in receipt of news from Spain—news of Fernando's death and of the ensuing regency of Cardinal Cisneros.

To an appointed executive any change of regime means trouble, and this one looked especially upsetting to Pedrarias. To appreciate why word of it could so affect the Governor's actions, and, indeed, to understand the whole course of events in the colony from this time onward, one must bear in mind the happenings in Castile, beginning in 1515.

For three years Fernando's health had been increasingly precarious—as a result, it was said, of a "cold potion" administered to him on behalf of Queen Germaine, in hope that it would enable him to give her a child for the throne of Aragon. In April of 1515 he had a particularly serious relapse, and thereafter he suffered acute attacks at intervals of about two months. Despite his condition, or perhaps because of it, he was driven by a consuming restlessness, moving constantly from place to place and often taking the road when he was almost too weak to stand. In September he went to Aragon, where the Cortes were in session. On his return he stayed for a short time in Madrid, and from there transferred to Plasencia.

On December twenty-seventh he started out again, his ultimate destination Seville. He got only as far as the village of Madrigalejo, near Trujillo. Fernando had never yielded abjectly to adversity. Now, lying in the convent of Guadalupe, so waxy and emaciated that he was almost unrecognizable, he still refused to believe that the end could come "so soon." With difficulty he was persuaded that he must make his last confession and receive the sacraments. His mind was clear, however, and he had long consultation with his advisers, which resulted in the drawing of a new will. In it he named his grandson Carlos to succeed him, and appointed Cisneros Regent of Castile during the heir's minority. A team of scribes, working with feverish

haste, finished a fair copy of the will for his signature on January twenty-second. Very early the next morning, his duty done and his body clothed with humility in the habit of St. Francis, Fernando died.

The last *cédulas* concerning Castilla del Oro to carry his signature were dated in Aranda on August second of the previous year, at which time he had seen nothing from Darién dated later than November 23, 1514. He left for Segovia shortly after, and there he left his council and Castilian secretariat when, semirecovered from yet another grave relapse, he journeyed on to Aragon. By this time everyone except Fernando himself realized that his days were numbered. There is reason to believe that correspondence regarding the Indies was not forwarded to him.¹ Colmenares said that he was able to negotiate most of his petitions very satisfactorily with Fonseca and Conchillos in Segovia, but that he was told that final approval and consideration of the more important items must be deferred until the King could be consulted. And during the last month in Plasencia, whither Colmenares, Oviedo, Casas, and other suppliants converged, Fernando was too ill for executive business. He listened sympathetically to Oviedo and Casas, referred them to Conchillos, who was by then in Seville, and promised to occupy himself with the matters they reported as soon as he reached that city. But for once he laid the importunate, disheartening memorials aside unread.

In the light of these facts it is interesting to consider a letter to the King from Balboa, dated December 14, 1514, and more especially, the notes which were appended thereto in Spain. These addenda have been considered proof that Balboa was now in Fernando's bad books. They are nothing of the kind. What they do prove is how far Pedrarias' sponsors were prepared to go to give him what he wanted.

The letter was the one in which Balboa, after thanking the King for his benevolence and promise of future recompense, replied to Fernando's invitation of an opinion on conditions in the colony. Like his other letters, it criticized Pedrarias for encouraging ruthless slaving by which "the colonists will be rich in a short time and the land depopulated before four years are out," and for expropriating the best houses and farm land from founding settlers (here, of course, there was reference to Balboa's two houses). It advised undivided authority for Pedrarias, not because Balboa thought him to be either capable

or desirous of good government, but in order to make him answerable for the administration of the colony. As it was, Balboa said, efficiency and responsibility were lost in arriving at joint decisions: ". . . when they do reach a conclusion, the time for it has passed, and if it turns out to be wrong the Governor says the officials voted for it and puts the blame on them, and they respond in kind."

The office copy of this letter bears the following annotations:

Handle this in secret. It will be answered that H. H. has seen his letters and marvels greatly at his persistence in his past effrontery in writing; and that because of this and of his talking about things so false as those he has written and writes, for this as well as for the things and crimes he committed at the time he thrust himself forward to usurp the government of that land, H. H. sent his lieutenant general to do the things of which he writes.

And the second note, brief and ominous:

Write to Pedrarias to give this to him after he has him under custody.

There is no evidence that the pseudo-cédula thus outlined (evidently to be collated with the Governor's demand, presented via Colmenares, for a fresh residencia of Balboa by a Pedrarias-appointed judge) was ever sent. Perhaps the King's return from Aragon intervened—he got back earlier than had been expected—or perhaps someone remembered the letter Fernando had written to Balboa in August, a letter designed to give comfort and encouragement and confirmed in another to Quevedo, which would make the proposed sequel look remarkably fishy. Whatever the explanation, it is pleasant to know that the last communication Balboa received from his sovereign was one of kindness.

Carlos, Archduke of the Netherlands and future Holy Roman Emperor, whom we call Charles V, was not quite sixteen years old when his grandfather died. The blood of poor Juana ran thin in his veins; he had grown up a Hapsburg, a Hapsburg imbued with Flemish ideas and dominated by Flemish councilors. He had never been in Spain, did not speak Spanish, and was guided almost entirely by his

chief minister and ex-guardian Guillaume de Croy, Seigneur de Chièvres and onetime favorite of Felipe the Handsome.

The Flemish courtiers had small liking for the Castilians, and Fonseca and Conchillos in particular were well up on their list of unpopular notables. What was more immediately distressing to protégés like Pedrarias was that Cisneros, slated to rule Castile for three years, also regarded Fonseca and Conchillos without enthusiasm. From the day Fernando's will was read and the Cardinal assumed the government, Fonseca went into eclipse. And before three weeks were out, Casas—intransigent crusader for the most unwelcome reforms—had become Cisneros' adviser in plans for a new dispensation in the Indies. No wonder Pedrarias, even before he knew the full scope of the Cardinal's intentions, felt a cold wind on his neck and made his peace with Balboa. He was in the position of a corrupt political henchman whose party has just lost the election.

Cisneros had not wanted the Regency, but when it was thrust upon him he ruled in the full sense of the word. Confirmed by Charles as sole Regent, he relegated the Flemish ambassador, Adrian (previously destined, in Brussels, for the position), to the innocuous role of consultant, and neutralized even more firmly subsequent efforts by Chièvres to pack the Regency with selected Flamands.²

The Cardinal needed all his astuteness and force. Castile was a troubled country after Fernando's death, torn by petty wars between rival grandees, uneasy with the connivings inevitable to an interregnum, and increasingly resentful of the "foreign" Prince. Moreover, the pillars of Cisneros' policy were impartial application of the law, reinforcement of the power of the Throne at the expense of that of the nobles, probity in administration, and, in the Indies, enforcement and extension of the liberal decrees of 1512–1513. It was a program which could not fail to provoke the heartiest opposition. Cisneros handled all this with his usual vigorous efficiency, but it was probably fortunate that he was rich enough to maintain a well-trained body of troops at his command.

As Chancellor and Primate, Cisneros was already well informed on colonial affairs. Most of the important people in the Indies—including Pedrarias—were personally known to him; his aide, Bishop Ruiz of Avila, had once been a priest in Hispaniola, and between

them they heard, directly or indirectly, a great deal more than appeared in official correspondence. In so far as Darién was concerned, he could also count on the aid—if aid is the right word—of the representations of Colmenares, Oviedo, and Enciso.³ What he made of them can be judged by the small success of all three, as well as by the tone of his only known correspondence with Pedrarias.

It will be remembered that Oviedo, Fray Diego de Torres, and Colmenares had sailed together from Santa María. Oviedo, with some complacency, says that the others had been sent to watch him: Colmenares by the Governor and Torres by the Bishop. It is probable that he flattered himself. At all events, when they reached Santo Domingo in June, Colmenares took passage at once on a ship then clearing for Spain, while the veedor, Torres, and a friar named Vega waited over for two months. When they did leave, they had an unusually long and stormy passage. In Funchal, which they made in two and a half months, Fray Diego and a few others went ashore, and the ship sailed again without them. In what can only be termed a deadpan passage, Oviedo explains that this was because a storm came up which made it advisable to seek the open sea (and, presumably, to keep going once away from port), but since he was serving as captain of the vessel, it is permissible to raise an eyebrow. Torres found another vessel afterwards, which took him to Cádiz, and died before he could disembark.

Oviedo, who seems to have reached Castile in November,⁴ reported to his chief, Conchillos, in Seville, got permission to proceed to Court and made for Plasencia. After talking with the King he went back to Seville to leave a written exposé with Conchillos, and then journeyed north again to his home in Madrid. He was thus on the spot when Cisneros and the Court got there at the beginning of February, but it was immediately apparent that the cozy security and influence he had enjoyed had already evaporated. He was, however, a persevering person, and he at once took ship for Flanders to try his luck with Charles. His voyage, roundabout and tempest-crossed, lasted four months (Oviedo's travels were so persistently beset by storms from which he barely escaped that they must have aroused some speculation as to the intentions of the Divinity), and when he at last reached Brussels he was politely shunted back to Cisneros. Back in Madrid,

he was equally unsuccessful: the Regent, briefed by Casas, doubtless considered him to be an imperialist in reformer's clothing, and with some justice.

Colmenares, much encouraged by his dealings with Fonseca and Conchillos, had also hastened to wait on Fernando in Plasencia. As procurador, he had what amounted to a double list of petitions, one from the colonists and the other from the Governor. The colonists had been disappointed when the main items in the list presented by Colmenares in 1513 were ignored: the much-advertised privileges then conceded had been substantially the same as those in the contract with Nicuesa and Hojeda. The requests they now submitted were mostly concerned with reductions of, or exemptions from, the normal royalties and taxes. They also asked permission to charge toll on the paths from the estuary and from the port; the establishment of perpetual regimientos, with perquisites of a half lot in entrada proceeds for regidores who stayed at home, and one and a half lots for those who went on expeditions; the right for each captain to apportion the booty of his entrada as seemed good to him and his men; a crest for the city of Santa María; and that all the original settlers be raised in the social scale—the commoners to hidalgos and the hidalgos to caballeros. This last was not merely a bit of ingenuous snobbery: rank meant privilege, including title to a quadruple *solar* and a quintuple area of farm land.

The petitions formulated by the Governor in accord with Puente and Márquez were the following: (1) Pedrarias to have absolute authority; (2) Pedrarias to name his own chief justice; (3) one functionary to serve as both treasurer and factor; (4) one functionary to serve as both contador and veedor; (5) a new residencia to be held of Balboa (see 1 and 2, above); (6) Balboa's gobernaciones to be transferred to Pedrarias; (7) the ecclesiastical organization to be reduced to two or three priests with a vicar general; (8) Santa Marta to be settled under a vice-governor with six hundred new recruits. This, as will be readily noticed, would have neatly solved every problem: it eliminated Balboa, the Bishop, Espinosa, Tavira, and left Pedrarias, Puente, and the docile Márquez happily untrammelled.

Aside from these requests, Colmenares had a far from modest list of his own. He asked for an asiento to go from the Pacific coast to

discover the Spice Islands ("which are there near by"), with three caravels to be built at the South Sea; that the expenses be paid, as a loan, by the Crown, and that royalties be fixed at half the normal rate. Nor was this all. He asked for the office of custodian and executor of estates for Castilla del Oro and Cuba; a life appointment and pay as royal captain; a perpetual regimiento in Tierra Firme; two hundred Indians in Cuba; a captain's pay from the Crown while serving as agent of the colonists, and reimbursement of 250 pesos he had contributed to the private charter of a ship which had accompanied Pedrarias' armada. Some months later he tacked on another 400 pesos for travel expenses. He justified these remarkable pretensions by the claim that he had been chiefly responsible for the colonization of Tierra Firme, about which region his knowledge was unique, having been gained in six years of exploring at his own cost. Perhaps he should have left out the justification; even had it been true, it had no bearing on the flourishing colonization of Cuba, and its exaggerations were too obvious. Colmenares had spent, altogether, two years and nine months in Tierra Firme, none of it as a leader.

So far as is known, the only thing Colmenares was able to obtain was the escutcheon for Santa María, and that was only a modification of one which had been granted before he reached Castile, and a diminishing modification at that. What the colonists asked for, and got, was a shield displaying the gold castle of Castile in a green field, with a "tiger" and a crocodile as dexter and sinister supports and a border of bows and arrows. In the original design, in which the jaguar and crocodile had been affronté, the castle, surmounted by a sun, had been on a red field like that of the royal arms—an important detail.

Colmenares, too, went to Brussels after Fernando's death. By the time Oviedo got there, probably in June, he was without hope or funds, and he begged the veedor "for God's sake, to take him back to Castile." Equally unsuccessful in Spain, he went off to Naples, neglecting to pay his debt to Oviedo before he left.⁵

Bachiller Enciso did not reach Spain until March of 1516. If he occupied himself with anything outside his personal affairs, it is not apparent. His first concern was to renew before the Royal Council his suit for the gold from Balboa's entradas to Careta and Ponca. He seems to have given up hope of Cemaco's gold; at least, he did not

refer to it when, in June, he summarized his claim and complained that he had received no satisfaction. The case was decided about the end of the year—how, is not stated. Since there was no mention of an award, and since the bachiller was afterwards uncommonly bitter about the Council, one may gather that he got nothing.

Meanwhile, Enciso had sized up the situation in Castile and learned what Cisneros had in mind for the Indies. He did not exactly jump on the band wagon—to which he was not invited—but he sought to show that it was no more than a redecorated model, of which he had been one of the original drivers. In 1513, he said, he and two colleagues had drawn up regulations for the distribution of Indians among the colonists; they were excellent regulations which avoided undesirable extremes, and it would be only just that their co-authors should now be appointed to execute and administer them. This ingenious suggestion seems to have fallen on deaf ears; it may be that the bachiller's curiously arrogant epistolary style told against him, and that his opportunist denunciations of his former benefactors, Fonseca and Conchillos, were considered rather bad taste. He did not return to the Isthmus. In 1518 he completed the one thing for which he must be truly admired: the *Suma de geografía*, published first in 1519.

While the representatives of Castilla del Oro drooped in the shade, Casas flourished mightily. Cisneros was too shrewd to be unaware of his faults; in his eighty years the Cardinal had met plenty of fanatics. But he also realized that Casas had the virtues as well of the defects of fanaticism, and that while he was not the only man experienced in the Indies to desire the natives' welfare or even their entire freedom, he was certainly the most forceful and articulate. Moreover, although Casas was capable of using somewhat questionable means to his lofty ends, his sincerity and personal honesty were above suspicion. Thus the priest from Hispaniola found himself a close collaborator in a plan which, as Enciso said, much resembled the resolutions and decrees of 1512 and 1513—the chief defect of which was that they had not been applied—and at the same time contemplated a speedier arrival at the goal of free Christian citizenship for the Indians.

The plan hinged, first, on a resolution and supplementary recommendations passed by the Royal Council, and second, on *de facto* substitution for Colón (who had been summoned to Castile in 1515)

of three eminent friars, charged with putting the reforms into effect. In addition, a special Judge of Residencias was appointed, in the person of a professor of law named Alonso Zuazo, who was given almost unlimited powers in his field. Finally, Casas was named "Protector of the Indians," with the advisory and watchdog functions the title implies.

The friars—until then, abbots—were the pick of a first selection of twelve. All were of the Order of St. Jerome, which was diplomatically neutral in the Dominican-Franciscan disagreements. They were Luis de Figueroa, Alonso de Santo Domingo and Bernardino de Manzanedo. Casas, who became bitterly critical of them when he found they would not let him dictate their every attitude and action, points out that they had no mandate to govern and were appointed only to carry out the measures in benefit of the Indians, and it is true that in official correspondence they were ambiguously called: "the Hieronymites who by order of His Highness reside in the Indies." The Regent could not cancel Colón's viceregal governorship, as Casas would have been the first to remark. But the fact remains that the Hieronymites were popularly called governors, functioned as such, and were so upheld by Cisneros.

It is possible that only dedicated servants of the Lord could have been induced to undertake the task laid on them, for they went as three Daniels among lions.

The first part of the reforms was guaranteed to create bad feeling in the privileged class of Crown officers and representatives wherever resident, for it abolished all their *encomiendas*, leaving them without laborers for their plantations and mines and thus at one stroke cutting off most of their incomes in the colonies.⁶ Had this been all, however, the Hieronymites could at least have enjoyed popular support, because the settlers had long felt that Indians so held should be redistributed among themselves. But the second part of the program aimed at doing away with *all* *encomiendas*. Unlike the first, it was to be arrived at only after study and preparation, but from the colonists' viewpoint its end product would be their economic ruin. Among other things it contemplated assigning one third of the gold recovered from mines (to be worked without Spanish supervision) to the Crown, and the remaining two thirds to the Indians.

Part Two was to be carried out first in Hispaniola, and then in Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, in that order. Castilla del Oro, which still consisted of a single settlement, would apparently be attended to later.

A heroic effort was made to keep the whole thing from being known in the Indies until the Hieronymites could get there. It was, of course, futile. True, at the time the ship which came to Santa María in June 1516 left Hispaniola, no news can have been received from Spain of later than March,⁷ at which time the cloud was no bigger than a man's hand. But since, even then, the hand appeared to be that of Casas, a future overcast could be suspected.

Pedrarias, obviously, knew nothing of specific instructions to the Hieronymites, or even that Hieronymites would be appointed, at the time he took Balboa unto himself as son-in-law. On the other hand, Fonseca and Colmenares, at least, must have informed him at once how ill the wind was setting, and he could imagine quite enough unpleasantness without the complication of reforming friars. He had, in fact, begun a long period of uneasiness and frustration, and although for Balboa its first effect was fortune, its last was tragedy.

XXVII

IN Darién the latter part of 1516 was a period of stasis. An unfamiliar peace lay on the settlement. No new expeditions were in preparation; Balboa, embraced by Pedrarias, was at work in Acla; the Bishop was relaxed in the serenity of success; Puente and Corral, if not reconciled to the situation, were at least quiescent. Even Enciso, never a soothing element in the colony, left for Castile.

It is a good time to pause and consider what it was like to be a resident of a pioneer colony. Although it is sometimes difficult to remember, life in Santa María was not all plots, perils, and politics. Hundreds of settlers, after the first few months, led a normal existence—normal, that is, for the time and place—stirred by top-level animosities in about the way that the public may be stirred by an acrimonious

election campaign, and concerned over entradas as, say, the people of Salem were over voyages in the pepper trade. They had farms, families, trade; they grew vegetables and grumbled about the upkeep of wooden houses in a tropical climate.

The word "families" must be taken in an elastic sense. A number were entirely conventional, made up of Spanish wives and children, with perhaps one or two female relatives who, it was hoped, would soon become wives themselves. Many armada men came with their sons (one brought three); several had brought their Spanish mistresses "so as not to sin with the Indians"—a nice distinction—among them, two royal captains, hidalgos both, who somewhat to their dismay soon found themselves married to their socially undesirable companions. One of these cases Oviedo found particularly distressing; the lady was not only vulgar, but ugly and overage as well. Finally, there were the households where an Indian woman and her half-Spanish children lived as securely as a legitimate family. Sometimes, indeed, rather more securely; Corral's Elvira, for instance.

Santa María had improved. The surrounding jungle had been cut back, letting in sun and air; the paths to the sea had been widened and surfaced with logs in the boggy parts, so that freight could be hauled in oxcarts. Houses were still basically the same as those of the Indians (there was not one building of stone or adobe in the settlement), but while many were only a short step removed from the simplest bohío, in others the native model had been adapted to dwellings of some pretension, with two stories and an attic, and those narrow balconies dear to the Spanish heart running across their cane façades. (Oviedo says he spent 1500 pesos on his and that it was fit to receive royalty, but this mansion was not built until 1521.)

Mostly from Oviedo's descriptions, we can picture quite well one of the better homes—"a desirable residence well situated on a plot nearly two hundred feet deep; eighty-four-foot frontage on the street," as the house agents would say. This house is a single-story structure ("ranch type"), framed with adzed lumber. The foundations consist of large stones set at about three-foot intervals, on which are laid heavy beams of some rot-proof wood like *guayacán*. The walls are made of canes, which, if cut in *menguante* (the waning moon) are very durable; the roof, which has an overhang of at least five feet, is

heavily thatched with a marsh grass which was considered superior to European thatch. Altogether, a cool, ventilated construction most suitable for the climate. Floors, sills, door, and shutters are of choice hardwoods sanded down to show the grain. The furniture is very like that the owner would have had in Spain: chairs, often with seats and backs of hide, heavy tables, presses, chests, beds with soft, kapok-stuffed mattresses, patterned rugs woven of cotton or colored reeds.

The house presents a rather blank face directly on the street. There is a strip of garden down one side, and a large yard and garden behind, where a surprising assortment of vegetables and herbs contend with chickens. It is shaded by trees of home: orange, lemon, lime, pomegranate, fig; there may even be an arbor hung with grapes of Málaga, for the colonists had learned, even as agronomists of the last decades, that by drastic pruning vines will yield in the tropics. Served hand and foot by naborias and slaves, our prosperous householder is by now more comfortable than he would care to admit.

According to the residents themselves, there were now not many more than 600 Spaniards in the colony (of whom about 435 were away on *entradas* or in *Acla*).¹ The farms fingering up the valleys round about could feed them and their Indians well. Here were corn in season, feathery fields of yuca, patchwork squares of native vegetables, rows of spiky pineapples. There were pigs, some cattle, sheep and goats, a few horses, and (since there was at least one jackass) probably some young mules.

In many parts of these latitudes corn is harvested twice a year, but in Darién only one crop was sown. At least every two or three years new land for it was cleared, turned over, and left for three months "to fertilize." (The custom has persisted through the centuries, producing the problems born of deforestation with which these countries contend today.) The time for seeding was the first quarter of the April moon; if the soil were dry, it was watered down two days beforehand. The actual planting resembled a stylized dance, a rhythmic invocation of the fecund earth. The sowers stood in line a pace apart, each with a planting stick in his hand and a bag of seed hung at his waist. As the foreman gave the word, they advanced in a stately measure: a thrust of the sticks, an inclination to drop four or five kernels in each hole, a sweeping movement as the loose earth was replaced, a slow stamp-

ing as the soil was firmed—then one pace forward and repeat. Something of the kind can be seen today. The corn sprouted in a few days; it was weeded, watered if necessary, watched over as it matured by small boys stationed on platforms, and gathered in September—quickly, lest it rot or wild pig and deer harvest it first. The Spaniards used the meal in all the ways learned from the Indians—in bread, dumplings, tortillas, as a mash for beer, toasted to sweeten bad drinking water.

Corn meal was, however, much more perishable than cassava, the flour made from yuca, about which baquiano colonists from Hispaniola knew more than the Indians of the Isthmus. The natives of Castilla del Oro cultivated yuca only as a vegetable, whereas in Hispaniola cassava was the staff of life. The settlers taught their *naborias* how to prepare it.

Yuca was grown on the stagger, or three-blind-mice, system. Its roots are edible at one year, better at two, and at three good only for fodder. It was planted sometimes in hills, but usually in *montones* (mounds) about thirty inches high and thirty to thirty-six inches across. Each mound produced a minimum of five pounds of cassava. Casas remarks that a plantation of tender, five-month yuca, 20,000 or 30,000 *montones* long by 5000 or 10,000 wide, was a beautiful sight. It must also have been one to put modern large-scale farming to the blush. A plantation 30,000 *montones* long would have stretched for thirty miles; one of 20,000 by 10,000 mounds would have covered 128,000 acres and yielded, over a two-year period, not less than a billion pounds of cassava. Even considering the heavy consumption (reckoned at fifty pounds a month per capita), this is a lot of cassava.

The list of European vegetables which Oviedo claims were grown successfully would please a dietician.² It is unexpected, and not only because of the climate; somehow one does not think of the conquistadores as vegetarian in taste. However, although the lettuce and cucumber of home may have provided a welcome change in menus, the colonists were well satisfied to rely mostly on indigenous products: half a dozen kinds of roots ("a cured sweet potato is not inferior to the best *marzipan*"); several kinds of squash, some legumes; the leafy vegetables known collectively in Cueva as *yraca*; herbs the Spaniards called by familiar names, like chicory, basil, parsley, cress, *salvia*,

verbená. They discovered the delicious native fruits—*chirimoya*, *mamey*, *anón*, *aguacate*, and a dozen more; they waxed lyrical over pineapples, of which there were three varieties. Coconuts, particularly on the Pacific coast, were a drug on the market. *Cápera* seeds, toasted, were exactly like hazelnuts. (For some reason, they did not learn to roast peanuts, and hence dismissed *maní* as poor stuff, more suitable for pigs than for human consumption.) A kind of bindweed (Cuevan: *y*) which covered much of the open land was found excellent pasturage, and its roots most satisfactory for fattening pigs.

The colonists adopted the medicinal plants of the Indians—then, as now, it seems that few growing things in these regions were not specifics for some human ill—and used the products at hand as substitutes for expensive imported ones. Soap berries and roots were fine, if drastic, detergents; dried crocodile dung made the best of pumice; mangrove bark was perfect for tanning. A kind of terebinth tree yielded turpentine; certain bees made an amberlike substance which was superior to any pitch or resin. There were fibers which made stronger rope and canvas than those of Spain, cotton both wild and cultivated, fleecy white kapok. Palms had a hundred uses. Plantain-like *bihao* leaves, huge and flexible, were invaluable for waterproof wrappings or shelters. The thick round leaves of *guayabara* and *copey*, on which white lines can be easily engraved, served for note paper and playing cards.

The settlers learned which woods to use for posts (*guayacán*, *macana*, *mangle*), which for house-trim and furniture (mahogany, cedar, *roble*), which for charcoal or firewood or gunpowder, which for light strong yokes and saddle-trees (*guásimo*, *totuma*). They also learned what to avoid: the poison tree they named manzanillo, which is more potent than any poison ivy, and—after an unfortunate compañero had used its leaves as toilet paper—a furiously caustic plant called *guao*. And they discovered that timber must be felled only during the waning moon, because otherwise it quickly rots.³

As the Reverend Mr. Borland remarked two and a half centuries later, “concerning the Bestials of this country, there is a great variety.” In general, the larger the Bestial, the less it troubled the colonists. Jaguar and puma were fairly common, but except for one or two rogue males they did little harm; the chicken-killing opossum and

weasels were much worse from a householder's point of view. Monkeys were a nuisance: they were dirty and mischievous, they advertised the presence of troops or hunters to the prospective victims; they threw things with disconcerting accuracy. (One hit a *compañero* in the mouth and knocked out five teeth.) But honey bear, ocelots, and coatis made amusing pets, and armadillos were delightful, so like little chargers fully housed that they provoked a question as to whether horse-armor had been first copied from, or by, armadillos.

The Spaniards complained less of snakes than of toads, and accepted vampire bats as a normal occupational hazard. What really disturbed them were the insects. They were plagued by spiders, scorpions, predatory crickets, battalions of ants as big as wasps, blond, three-inch cockroaches "that fly when they wish and have a bad smell," super-botflies which respected neither man nor beast, centipedes, termites. (It was noted, however, that termites, like hurricanes, decreased greatly once the Host was installed in the churches.) And here, too, molestation was in inverse ratio to size. Mosquitoes and sand flies were "importunate and insatiable," but they were a lesser curse than chiggers and the almost invisible mites called *yaibí*. Jungle craft as learned by the conquistadores included things like taking bearings by testing the thickness of bark and recognizing the trees which stored sweet water in their stems or roots, but the unromantic knack of extracting burrowing niguas and mites was the most important, and in many districts it had to be practiced nightly, however exhausting the day's march.

Returning to the larger fauna, one is struck by the apparent plenty of game and fish. How could the colonists ever go hungry? There were deer, rabbit, half a dozen tasty representatives of the guinea-pig family, droves of wild pig. Manatee yielded, it was said, five flavors of meat, all good; tapir was tough but sustaining. Frogs, a delicacy to the Indians, were not popular, but iguanas were delicious, and could, moreover, be eaten on fast days because, being "neutral animals," they could conveniently be classed as fish. Seals were fairly common, turtles much more so, especially in Careta. There were several kinds of "turkeys" and "pheasants," and at the time of migration the sky was dark with birds. Fish ranged from tuna and swordfish to minnows, in infinite variety.

Scarcity amid all this abundance is less strange than it appears. Hunting is difficult in rugged, densely jungled country, particularly when the country is also hostile. Migrating flocks do not fly within crossbow range, and although ducks and geese came down to rest in the marshes, this was only during a few weeks each year; also, they were hard to kill and still harder to recover in the deep swamps which lay in unfriendly territory. The big fish ran only at certain seasons of the year, which were those of the heavy winds.

The Spaniards picked up some interesting zoological data. The unending warfare between seals and sharks fascinated them, as well it might. One fancies, however, that the seals could have held their own even against sharks organized "like German mercenaries" had they been left alone by the Spaniards. Seal fur, incidentally, never ceased to answer to the sea; old and moth-eaten, it still flattened or stood erect according to the state of the ocean. It was noted that Providence had neglected to provide crocodiles with an organ of evacuation; also that the reptiles gave off an agreeable perfume. From such observation as could be made of the migrating birds comes the surprising information that except for ducks and geese they were "small eagles and medium-sized ones and even royal eagles," or at any rate, all birds of rapine; they passed over Darién in March and early April, headed south, and since they never returned, it was concluded that they continued their flight around the world.

The tapir was perplexing: "it has a trunk like an elephant, but it is not an elephant; a hide like a bull's, but it is not a bull; its hoofs resemble those of a horse, yet it is not a horse." It was also useful; an excellent heart medicine could be made from its hoofs, and "it breeds in its entrails a stone which is an effective antidote to poison." And the sloth, otherwise dull enough, was interesting for its musical ability, since it sings all night in a descending chromatic scale—except, as Oviedo scrupulously points out, that it pronounces "ha, ha, ha . . ." instead of "do, ti, la, sol . . ."⁴

On the whole, however, the conquistadores were probably more surprised at what they did not find than by what they did. They had been prepared for much stranger beasts. A world where even familiar animals promptly developed unfamiliar habits, particularly mating habits, could surely produce more startling phenomena. And in fact, in

three reported instances it did: one in the air, one on land, and one in the sea.

To be fair, none of these was proper to Darién or even to Castilla del Oro. But two of them were reported by men of the colony, and the other figures in an account of Nicuesa and Hojeda—which in view of their fascination is excuse enough to include them here.

The air monster was a demon—not a beautiful boy-demon like Tuíra, but an evil and oppressive one in the shape of an immense bird. From time to time he swept down from his home in the Cordillera on the hamlets of the Atrato Valley, and his coming brought earthquake and flood. When he hovered over a village his wings shut out the sun; he could carry a man in his talons as an eagle might a field mouse, and he demanded human sacrifice. The Indians described him and his visitations in impressive detail; the Andean condor has never been more magnificently presented.

The sea creature—or rather, creatures, for there were two—are not so readily explained. They were seen in full daylight and at close range by Oviedo, the noted pilot Juan Cabezas, the canon of the cathedral of Castilla del Oro, Father Lorenzo Martín, an hidalgo named Sancho de Tudela, and the rest of the passengers and crew of a small caravel Panama-bound from Nicaragua in 1529. The monster which was nearest the ship was much bigger than the other (Oviedo thought they might be father and son), and both were in fine fettle. For some time they put on a singular exhibition, alternately rearing far out of the water and falling back with a resounding splash which rocked the caravel. "What he [the larger one] showed above water, which was his head and two arms and from there down a part of the body, was much taller than our caravel with its masts . . . about five times the height of a fairly tall man." Head and body were about the same thickness, some thirteen or fourteen feet in diameter. It was thought that they might be some kind of whale, but Oviedo remarks that the arms of the nearer animal were twenty-three feet long and as big around as a cask, "and some people said that whales do not have them." He adds, firmly, "What I saw is what I have stated, for I was on the caravel."

The third monster appeared in a book by Charles Fontaine—*Description des terres trouvées de notre temps*, published in 1559—

and, it may be safely said, only there. Fontaine says it was found on the beach of Veragua on January 4, 1543, and that he had its description, together with a drawing of it from life, from an eyewitness, a Portuguese gentleman named Varallo, who was on his way home from India at the time. An illustration taken from Varallo's sketch and chastely labeled *Merveille* is inserted—in the middle of an unintentionally diverting account of the adventures of "Alphonse" (Hojeda), "Ancise" (Enciso), "Pisator" (Pizarro) *et al.*

It is a superb portrait. The Marvel has a large, elusively human face, a huge tusk-filled mouth, a snout which looks like a length of pipe wrapped with insulating bands; its ears, edged by a ridge of spines, curl like spiked pretzels, a similar spiny crest runs down the center of its forehead and smaller dittos serve it as eyebrows. Its body, covered with large scales, terminates in a tail like that of a nightmare mermaid; its forelegs (all it has) might be those of an arthritic dragon, and its expression is utterly malignant. Fontaine's text supplies further information. It was fifteen paces long, its head was the size of a cask and its eyes as big as plates, the end of its tail was furnished with functioning snake heads. The apparent wrappings of its snout, which was as thick as a man's thigh, were really collapsible sections which could be extended like a telescope; the "Merveille" shot water from this remarkable organ to the length of an arquebus shot. It was killed by artillery fire. Not the least interesting feature of the story is that Varallo found himself in the western Caribbean while sailing from India to Portugal.

Perhaps it was a pity that there were not more marvels to amuse the colonists. Santa María, in late 1516, was reasonably prosperous and healthy, but it was undoubtedly dull. Since manual labor was disdained and diversions were few, time must have been heavy on the hands of the vecinos left at home. There was small incentive to improve further a settlement which everyone knew to be doomed if Pedrarias had his way, or to extend agriculture when the number of settlers continued to shrink, or to build a proud church such as colonists elsewhere erected to dominate dreary villages. On fiesta days they could dress up and enjoy a violent game of cañas, or compete in cutting off the heads of buried chickens while passing at a dead gallop,

but fiestas were few and far between. So were ships from home, and the tempered joys of public auctions. Cockfights were limited by the small supply of gamecocks. Betting, on anything from the outcome of an entrada to a battle of matched cockroaches, was an ever-present pastime, and so were cards, dice, chess, and pitching pennies, but not everyone can find unwearying satisfaction in gambling day after day, year after year. Even lawsuits are a sport that can sometimes pall.

One imagines the bored groups lounging in the plaza, endlessly turning over and re-embellishing the same stale gossip, quick to seize any fresh bit of scandal to refurbish the too familiar stock. No wonder differences became quarrels, and that, in the Hieronymites' words, the gravest problem in the Indies was "to calm the burning breasts of these Castilians, which make them so wicked one with the other that we think all the material remedies in the world would not suffice to cure them, but only divine grace."

In the settlement a man could sleep safe in a downy bed, be well served at a table, sit in a comfortable chair; he could deal at shops which carried goods from Spain and make a little himself from occasional private commerce; he could enjoy the children, white or brown, who grew up in his house. Yet all in all, one imagines that the expeditionaries in unsubdued country, held to concord by common action and common risks, were more contented than the vecinos compelled to the tedious security of Santa María.

XXVIII

WHEN Espinosa got back to Darién, he was able to report that the settlement at Acla, then six months old, was already the equal of Santa María, and so abundantly provided with food that "one eats there as well as in Seville." This, in its way, was Balboa's most remarkable achievement, for it represented manual labor on the part of the Spaniards. As Unamuno remarks, the conquistadores were prepared "to conquer at the cost of a thousand hardships but not by force

of hard work." Lacking native serfs, the fighting men of Castile, lords of a subject world, had cut and cleared, built houses, tilled the soil, felled trees, and shaped lumber for the ships they would one day build at the Pacific. Even Balboa could not have inspired so unique an effort had he stuck to the conventional role of commander. He accomplished it because he worked side by side with his men, "the first to set an example," and took the most strenuous tasks for himself.

Espinosa's returning expeditionaries, relaxed and well fed, told Balboa all he had never been permitted to verify for himself about the land he was supposed to command. The skeleton of what they had to relate is in a lengthy report submitted by Espinosa to Pedrarias. The inserts and appendices mentioned in the text are missing, and, being composed in *usum Delphini*, it leaves out much that we would most like to know, but since it is the only such report in the history of Darién to be preserved, it makes the alcalde's expedition the best documented of any that went out from Santa María. In conjunction with the chronicles (more colorful than accurate) and other data, it presents a story easier told in a volume than in a few paragraphs.¹

Espinosa, after hearing of Badajoz' experiences, had wasted little time on the impoverished rebels of Cueva. Making directly for more lucrative reprisals, he did what damage he could in the course of a rapid march down the Bayano Valley, and pushed through to Natá, where he arrived at the end of March 1516. Here he stayed four months, sending out raids to neighboring chiefdoms (Coclé, Escoria, Cherú, *et al.*) while he waited for the additional troops asked of Pedrarias.

In late July he decided to proceed. The reinforcements had not arrived, and an embassy to Parisa of four Natán Indians had returned in June, less one of their number, to report failure, but these negative factors were offset by others which had more weight. Food was running short in Natá; the Indians had thus far been easily subdued, in part because they were terrified of the expedition's horses, and therefore did not seem to present danger from the rear. More important, it had been learned that both Escoria and Parisa were at the moment as weak as they might ever be. For some reason they had indulged in one of those wars so useful to a common enemy. Waged with uncom-

mon ferocity, it had left few of the towering, fair-skinned warriors of Escoria alive, and even Parisa was in no state to withstand fresh aggression.

On July twenty-ninth the expedition left Natá. Escoria was taken by assault the same night, and on August first the Spaniards reached the site of Cutatara's capital to find it turned into a deserted cemetery. The space between the gutted houses was paved with the bones of Escorians and Parisans, making a grisly avenue which terminated in a great mound of skulls. Cutatara, however, did not give up easily. He mustered the warriors left to him and sallied forth to give battle to the invaders. The encounter took place in open ground somewhere between the old capital and the new (i.e., between the present towns of Pesé and Los Santos), and lasted for six hours. At nightfall the Spaniards were victorious; three days later their position was assured by the arrival of Valenzuela and his troops.

From mid-August until the end of the year the main portion of the expedition scoured the Azuero Peninsula, where most of the chieftains were vassals of Cutatara. The remaining troops, in five big canoes, explored the coast as far as the Gulf of Montijo. This contingent was led by Bartolomé Hurtado, "a handy man with canoes," and included two experienced pilots. On January 3, 1517, the main section started from Parisa on the homeward way; the canoe detachment caught up with it in Cherú apparently about the end of February, and three weeks later the expedition was once more in Santa María.

The foregoing gives no idea of the interminable looting, slaving, and slaughter of the fifteen-month campaign; Fray Francisco de San Román, who was there, said that 40,000 Indians were killed. Neither does it convey the hardy valor of the troops whom Espinosa sent out under subaltern captains to raid and conquer. (The commander was careful of his person; his official report of the entrada fails to reveal a single instance in which he took the lead in either scouting or action.) Condensed, an account of the brutal saga would be little more than a dreary catalogue of cruelties. A few incidents may be noted; they suggest the whole.

One event, the most outstanding from Espinosa's viewpoint, was the finding of Badajoz' loot, stored in an isolated hut in a rugged, forested spot three miles from Usagaña. It was revealed by two Indians

whom Chief Cutatara, unable to withstand Spanish pressure and unwilling to appear cowed, had planted as captives with instructions to "betray" its location. Badajoz and his companions, who probably claimed a half interest, indicated they had lost 80,000 to 100,000 pesos (an estimate which Casas, typically, raised to 140,000). Andagoya, speaking for an expedition which naturally wanted to share as little as possible, said the recovered loot came to 30,000 pesos, and that it was "intact, with nothing missing." Oviedo, on the basis of the veedor's records, agrees that 30,000 pesos was found, but adds that Cutatara had repossessed himself of his own gold, leaving untouched that of other chiefs.²

Two examples of Espinosa's methods of coercion will suffice. Before starting back from Parisa, he had the captive chief of Chicacotra torn in pieces by dogs, with the casual explanation that because of the torture he had undergone he was valueless anyway, and that he was suspected of invoking evil spirits against the Spaniards. The latter is a reference to the chief's warning that the expedition should steer clear of Parisa on the return journey, because "devils" would open the earth and swallow them—a prophecy which had punctual, if partial, fulfillment in a violent earthquake. And two weeks after disposing of Chicacotra, Espinosa wound up ten days of sack and pillage in Escoria by murder of its hostage chief.

Hurtado's sub-entrada by canoe—which was comparatively humane and which left the important chieftain of Cebaco Island a technical Christian, surnamed for his friendliness "*el cacique amigo*"—went smoothly without loss of a man, "except," Espinosa noted laconically and enigmatically, "for Messer Codro, who in view of his condition could not escape." Codro's end came on Cebaco; Oviedo says that the Spaniards saw him die without care and without pity, and that when he threatened to accuse Valenzuela of responsibility, that captain laughed and quipped, "I'll give a power of attorney to my father and forefathers, to answer you in the next world."

In lighter vein, one may note the pleasing reports of a two-headed, round-footed race living somewhere beyond the Gulf of Montijo, and the deification of a jackass. The donkey made the round trip (though not, as one historian states, as a mount for the commander) in signal honor. The natives were easily convinced that the strange creature

with the terrible voice was a god incarnate, whose blared demands for tribute might not be denied.

In Comogre, Espinosa found Serrano encamped with eighty followers. The alcalde's report says that Serrano had been sent to chastise the Comograns for killing some "tame" Caretan porters (those who had accompanied the dean from Chimán), but if this was his object, he had approached it by a roundabout route. Serrano had started from Santa María in May of 1516 (after having spent six to ten weeks cruising the coasts of Urabá in search of news of Becerra), apparently just before Balboa graduated from caged criminal to Governor's son-in-law. The entrada had gone first to Nombre de Dios, and from there via Pequení, Chagre, and Capira to the Pacific. Beyond this it is not clear how it spent its time; Serrano was a fellow who neither publicized his deeds nor inspired others to do so. Also, his expedition, though successful enough, was overshadowed by that of Espinosa, particularly as regards the proceeds—just over 7700 pesos of gold against Espinosa's 55,300; 3200 pesos in slaves compared to Espinosa's 8600 pesos' worth.

(Incidentally, it would be interesting to know how the 50,400-peso profit, net of quinto, from Coiba was apportioned under the new discretionary system, and still more, how it was made to appear as to fineness. As nearly as can be reckoned from Puente's disingenuous bookkeeping, Serrano's gold—none of which was declared as guanín—was distributed at only 320 maravedíes to the peso.)

Balboa's satisfaction at seeing so many prospective recruits return to Darién must have been tempered by a certain pique. Most of the profit registered by Espinosa and Serrano had come from *his* gobernación. He can scarcely have refrained from some simple addition, based on declared returns from the entradas that had invaded his territory after Pedrarias knew of his appointment: Morales + Badajoz + Serrano + Espinosa = 103,865 pesos gross proceeds. However, it was no use crying over spilt cream; the thing to do now was to claim men for his own undertaking before they could be dispersed in other entradas. To this end he hurried to Santa María in March 1517.

For a time he was kept dangling. The Governor was once more determined to go in person to the Pacific, specifically, to Panama and

Coiba. He reasoned that where so much treasure had been secured, much more must be available, and for once he was right: in one already plundered village Espinosa, in 1519, was able to loot graves to the tune of 330 pounds of gold. The Indians of Coiba had been effectively softened up; it had been learned that Veragua was accessible by an established route in six or seven days from Escoria; Hurtado had intelligence of rich, easily traversed chiefdoms beyond the Gulf of Montijo. The information about the great western kingdoms, where people cultivated the arts in opulent ease, had not been forgotten. Neither had the ambition to move the capital from Santa María to a strategic location on the South Sea.

It is awkward to combat the enterprise of a parent-in-law who is also a political superior, especially when the surface amenities are fulsomely preserved. Fortunately for Balboa, his dilemma was resolved by the arrival of dispatches on the first of June. Having read them, the Bishop and the officials joined in serving an injunction on the Governor to remain in Santa María and to send out Balboa, Albítez, and Tavira without delay. Their motives were explained in the document. They were, apart from Pedrarias' health, Carlos' continuing absence from Spain (which meant the continuing regency of Cisneros), the bitter contentions in Castile (which meant uncertainty as to where the power would fall), the expected arrival of a judge-investigator and that of the Hieronymite governors, and the ominous tidings that special orders could be expected from the Royal Council. In short, anything might happen, and when it did, it would probably be unpleasant.

The Governor had no choice but to obey an injunction concerted by all his associates in government. (It is diverting to think how the necessary unanimity must have been arrived at: Tavira holding out until Puente agreed to drop his opposition to the long-planned Atrato expedition; Puente extorting approval of Albítez as the price of including Balboa; the Bishop insisting on clearance for Balboa before underwriting the unpalatable Puente-Albítez proposal.) As a result Balboa was able to get away by early July, and Tavira in the latter part of September. Albítez, with 1500 pesos of Crown gold in his pocket, was already in Hispaniola, laying—it was hoped—the groundwork for his expedition. He needed no fresh authorization from the

Governor and the officials, his sponsors since 1515, but he could not do without special license from the King or the Hieronymites; Balboa's grants expressly stated that no one might stay in his gobernación save by his consent.

The Tavira expedition proved a fiasco beside which Balboa's locust-plagued attempt in the same direction paled. The factor started with two hundred men (Hernando de Soto and Pizarro among them) in a fleet of three ships and seven canoes. He got about seventy leagues up the Atrato without recorded incident for good or ill, and there, while trying to transfer from one ship to another, he was drowned, taking with him in desperate embrace his treasurer, Virués. The expedition, minus a few more men picked off by river Indians, got back to Santa María in December—under Pizarro, the perennial stopgap. It had cost Tavira 8000 pesos; its total gross proceeds were fifty-two pesos of guanines. By way of consolation, Pizarro and as many expeditionaries as cared to accompany him were allowed to make another entrada, billed for Abraime but actually, according to Puente's accounts, to the Pacific coast. Its itinerary may explain why its doings went unreported, save for a bookkeeping entry from which it appears that it was over within six months and got nothing except a few slaves.

Albítez was never able to put his project into effect. In September he returned to Darién to tell his backers that the Hieronymites had turned him down. Toward the end of the year he was sent to try again, if necessary in Spain. With Andrés Niño as aide and future partner, he reached Santo Domingo in January. The Hieronymites, adhering to Cisneros' line, were still cool, but before long word came of the Cardinal's death, and Niño went on to negotiate the business in Castile. He arrived to find it had already been concluded: on March twentieth, Charles had signed an order to the Hieronymites to give Albítez his asiento, and thus bilked, Niño stayed in Spain. The rest of the story continued the sequence of near misses: before the King's cédula was received in Santo Domingo Albítez went back to Darién; before word of it reached Santa María, he had given back the gold advanced for organization of his expedition and gone off on a raid to Veragua; and before he finally learned of it, a situation had developed which made his plan unfeasible.

As for Balboa, freed at last to go to the gobernación bestowed on him two and a half years before, he lost no time in profiting by the officials' injunction and the permit to leave that followed. The Governor's manner of yielding was, however, wholly in character: assuming an attitude of paternal benevolence, he yet gave not one inch more than he had to. He could not forbid Balboa to develop his territory, but he could refrain from making it easy for him to do so. None of the subsidies and credit scheduled for Albítez were available to the Adelantado of the South Sea; Pedrarias, as he later pointed out with complacency, had given orders that the expedition was to be made without touching the royal treasury or goods. And the contract of the previous year was neither renewed nor extended, although more than half of an already niggardly time allowance had passed. Of the contract itself only an isolated paragraph is known—one which Pedrarias afterwards extracted and had certified for uses of his own. It would be interesting to know what the rest of it said, and why Pedrarias suppressed it when it would have been normal to introduce the whole document. Perhaps, in the first flush of reconciliation and kinship, he had dictated more liberal authorizations than could be conveniently admitted later on.

The excerpt which was preserved is as follows:

. . . And having concluded this, you the said vasco nuñez de valboha Adelantado, with the people who seem good to you will go to the river of the chief of ponca, which is on the south sea slope and which flows into the gulf of sant miguel, and there in what appears to you the best situation, with the shipwrights you take with you, you will see that ships are built with all diligence. And you will endeavor to see and talk to the said chief of ponca and to have complete peace and friendship with him and to reduce him to the service of their highnesses without doing him any hurt; and you must do the same with the other chiefs bordering the said settlement of acra [Acla] because their friendship and quietude are very necessary for the conservation of the said settlement.

How many of the men who seemed good to Balboa were allowed to accompany him in 1517 is an open question. As nearly as can be reckoned, he took about a hundred and seventy-five from Santa María to add to the sixty personal followers he had in Acla. Most of the

surviving baquiano colonists were of the number, but they were a minority; it was said that only forty of the true veterans were left. One old-timer who was missing was Leoncico. He would have been an elderly conquistador by then, but that was not why he was absent from the roster. An unidentified enemy of his master had poisoned him. The canicide was a Spaniard, which is rather ironic when one thinks how many Indians had spared the white *tibá's* dog.

About thirty of the expeditionaries can be named. One was Valdarrábano, the recording notary of the discovery of the Pacific. Another was Hernando de Argüello, who had registered the oath to deny Nicuesa; he remained in Darién to serve as Balboa's resident representative. Four were pilots: Martín de los Reyes, Gonzalo de los Ríos, Juan de Castañeda, and Bartolomé Pimienta²—good men with whom to explore an untraveled ocean. Two members of the expedition wrote about it afterwards—Diego de la Tobilla and Pascual de Andagoya, future titular governor of the coast south of the Gulf of San Miguel. Hernando de Soto joined them after he returned from Tavira's *entrada*. Others of Balboa's men, like Bartolomé Hurtado, Juan Tello, and the ubiquitous Alonso Martín de Don Benito, became famous in their time in Central America and Peru; Andrés de Garabito was to gain renown of a sort for his part in Balboa's end. And there were two otherwise obscure expeditionaries who were to achieve in their dying a celebrity previously denied them: Hernando Muñoz and Luis Bortello.

The expedition was entirely self-financing. (Pedrarias subsequently threw out remarks that it had cost him a lot, but neither he nor anyone else ever substantiated them.) Balboa, apparently while in Acla, had formed "The South Sea Company." Among its principal shareholders were Argüello, Tobilla, Rogel de Loria and Beltrán de Guevara (of the board of directors); Diego Rodríguez (attorney); Diego Hernández; and the chaplain, Rodrigo Pérez, a muscular cleric who was archdeacon of the cathedral, and who contributed 210 pesos. Balboa put in what he could from his mining claims, and the proceeds of the business he had conducted for Arbolancha with the exception of 300 pesos which had somehow gotten into the hands of Espinosa.

Diego Hernández' investment was the cost of recruiting and outfitting volunteers from Hispaniola and Cuba. He had not long returned

from Spain,⁴ and since his family was prominent in Seville, he must have been able to give and receive a good deal of information during his stay in that center for colonial affairs. It is significant that when he got back to Darién, he threw in his lot with Balboa. With Pedrarias' sanction, a certain sum in company gold for purchase of supplies, and letters for the Hieronymite governors, he sailed for Santo Domingo, perhaps on the same ship which had brought the disturbing dispatches.

Balboa had no intention of lingering in Darién to invite fresh obstacles. Hernández' recruits would be useful, but they were not essential to a captain who had carried a world-shaking expedition to triumph with a force of eighty-three men. The injunction had been presented to Pedrarias on June ninth, and some days must have passed before he acted on it. Three weeks later Balboa and his men were already in Acla, bound for the South Sea.

XXIX

WHILE Balboa applied himself in Acla to preparations for the move to the Pacific, one of his officers—Francisco Compañón, nephew to Albítez—went with a small company to the Gulf of San Miguel to select a site for the shipbuilding camp. When he returned, he was again sent out, this time with thirty Negro slaves (origin unspecified), to build a way station on the other side of the pass. Immediately afterwards the transfer to the South Sea began. The date appears to have been late August of 1517.

It was heavy going. Other expeditions made marches far longer and more perilous, over more difficult terrain, but none, perhaps, deliberately undertook one in similar condition. For, lacking native porters, the Spaniards themselves carried their baggage and the material they had assembled for the ships. Balboa himself packed one of the heavy planks—which, three to four inches thick, would have weighed close to a hundred pounds. Anyone who has moved even a light plank by a crooked, constricted and overgrown path can imagine

what it was like to carry the heavy-hewn ship-lumber in tropic heat over a mountain track. Veterans of the expedition who in after years compiled proofs of merit usually passed lightly over its orthodox hardships, but they were emphatic about that unorthodox portage.

At first glance it seems odd that any lumber should have been taken. Pitch, cordage, gear, sails, the anchors which taxed gangs of sweating *compañeros*—all these, yes. But why lumber, when there was more timber around the Gulf of San Miguel than coal in Newcastle? The reason was that Careta was believed (mistakenly) to produce a timber peculiarly adapted to shipbuilding in that it was impervious to broma;¹ furthermore, it could be prepared while waiting for clearance to go to the Pacific, where time could be better spent in exploration and exploitation. Albítez had the same idea.

Balboa's contract had stressed the necessity for friendly relations with the chief of Ponca, in the erroneous belief that the Chucunaque was his river. But the established way from Careta to the Gulf of San Miguel via the Chucunaque Valley left Ponca well to the northwest. Balboa undoubtedly took the easy pass to the Subcutí. From here he had a choice of routes. One was to follow the Subcutí to its confluence with the Chucunaque and then go down the Chucunaque; it was long, due to the demented twisting of the river, but *if* the water were high and *if* canoes were available, the last part of it was restful. The other route was by the Indian trails which cut across the low divides between one affluent of the Chucunaque and another, and by which the main river could be gained far down towards the present village of Yavisa. Whichever was taken in the first transfer from Acla, the overland route seems to have been that subsequently used.

What cannot be said with certainty is the location of the ship-building camp. It was on a river, at some distance from the Gulf—but which river? The expeditionaries called it Río de la Balsa or Río Balsas, and the latter name was long applied to the lower Tucutí, which comes into the estuary of the Tuíra from the south. And on a seventeenth-century manuscript map, the triangle between the mouth of the Balsas-Tucutí and that of the Vagre (Marea) is marked: "*here blasco nuñez de balboa built his bergantines 1515.*" But on the chart drawn by Pizarro's pilots in 1526, only eight years after the ships were built, the Río de la Balsa is, beyond question, the Chucunaque—

which, after all, was that specified in Balboa's contract. On this basis (shifting names and later statements to the contrary), and bearing in mind that the camp was situated above the head of tides and at a point where the river was narrow enough for the expeditionaries to throw a bridge of lianas across it, one must conclude that the site was on the Chucunaque just above Yavisa.

All in all, Compañón seems to have chosen well: a place where there was level ground for the camp, where the river ran deep between firm banks, and where the back country was fertile and well settled with Indians of the Cuevan tongue living in scattered, self-governing clans. It was clear of the tremendous tides which affect the Tuíra for eighty miles or more and are felt even on the Chucunaque as far as Yavisa; and the so-called "rapids" between it and the estuary appear to have been no more than riffles, in evidence only when the river was low. There are healthier, airier regions around the Gulf, but even had they been otherwise suitable, they were much less accessible from Acla. For that matter, although the Yavisa district had a bad name for malaria and other ills (in addition to an extraordinary concentration of chiggers), it is notable that there was not a single death among the expeditionaries.

Thus Balboa's troubles at Río de la Balsa—and they were many—were not due to poor judgment, unless the very undertaking of such a venture with no more than eight months to do it in and without a maravedí's worth of government aid could be so labeled. They were caused by inadequate labor and transport, defective or insufficient materials, and the incalculable accidents of Isthmian weather. These were enough to make a Sisyphean hades of the next few months, when each difficult bit of progress was quashed by a fresh reverse.

The first concerns were to make a clearing, erect shelters, set up stages for the sawyers and ways for the ships, and to throw the bridge, woven Indian-fashion of lianas, across the river. It was then discovered that the lumber was only enough for two bergantines; worse, much of it was already rotten, either because it was the wrong kind of wood or because, to save time, it had been cut at the wrong season of the moon. Balboa therefore set one third of his company to logging and associated chores; another third were assigned to foraging, and the

remainder to transportation and improvement of the trail over the pass.

Just when actual construction was to begin, the river rose in sudden flood. The camp was deluged before anything could be done to save the supplies,² and the expeditionaries, perched in trees, could only watch helplessly as their precious lumber and provisions were swept away. When the river had gone down a little, Compañón volunteered to lead a party to look for food (the foraging contingent was away). The liana bridge had held firm, although part of it was four feet under water; Compañón and his men managed to cross it, and got back from their mission just in time to save the rest of the company from starvation.

At this point Balboa called a meeting and asked his associates if they wanted to abandon the enterprise. It may be that for a moment he lost heart; it would not have been strange, after battling adversity for three and a half years. If so, it was not the motive for the conference. That was called for exactly the reasons that prompt any joint-stock company which has lost most of its capital and equipment at the time that its license to operate is about to expire. The shareholders faced the problem, and unanimously declared that they wanted to stay in business.

This decided, the requisite was more of everything: more men, more materials, more time. Balboa left at once to see to it. He did not, however, go farther than Acla lest he be trapped in the bureaucratic coils of Santa María; Hurtado went on to Darién with his reports, a little gold, and the request for an extension of the contract. The petition, submitted by Argüello to Pedrarias, was granted on January 13, 1518—but only for a miserly four months from the original expiration date. Meanwhile, Hernández had turned up with twoscore volunteers from Hispaniola. These and twenty more proceeded with Hurtado to Acla, and were promptly inducted into conquest in the Balboa manner. Laden with assorted gear and the provisions Hernández had secured in a call at Jamaica, they were all at the Balsas in February.

Meanwhile, the men at the camp had recovered some lumber from the river mud and prepared more from timber felled nearby. In May the ships were finished. This was the end of the dry season, and the

river was inconveniently low, but by patient effort, digging channels through the intervening riffles, they were eased down to the estuary and the passage to the Gulf. And there at their moorings, leaking at every wormy pore, they quietly settled to the bottom.

It would seem that even for such stubborn adventurers this would be the end, particularly as the four months' grace allowed them was almost gone, and Pedrarias refused to be pinned down to a decision either for or against another extension. The Governor's attitude, coupled with a response to Balboa's appeal for funds which had the look of an unpleasant joke (a loan of 100 pesos, which was repaid, perhaps in protest, almost at once), was a gauge of the assistance which could be expected from Santa María.

The expeditionaries, camping near the half-submerged product of ten months' struggle, weighed their chances and resolved to go on. Somehow they had to float the bergantines and get away in them; not even Pedrarias, it was felt, could recall Their Highnesses' Adelantado of the South Sea once he was fairly launched on exploration and colonization of his gobernación. This, they were to learn, was a miscalculation.

As a first objective Balboa fixed on the Pearl Islands, which were near enough to be gained, with luck, in the wallowing bergantines, and yet conveniently removed from too easy communication with Santa María. The ships were hauled ashore and careened as well as circumstance allowed, messengers were dispatched to Darién to advise of the departure, and in several rather alarming trips the expedition passed to Terarequí. Here, in something less than three months, two larger vessels were completed, and this time they were seaworthy.

Despite Casas' offhand statement that Balboa "looted and scandalized the big Isle of Pearls, and who knows, killed and captured many people," the fact is that there were few native inhabitants left to plunder. They had begun to move out immediately after Morales' visit; in 1516 Espinosa had found Chief Toé living on the mainland as a vassal to the lord of Chimán, and it was stated in 1522 that no more than 317 Indians were living in the archipelago.³

Toward the end of September, Balboa took eighty or a hundred men and set out in the new ships for the mainland, leaving the rest of his force to build two more ships at the island.⁴ It was said at the time

that he had received a letter from the Archbishop of Seville, telling him that if he sailed west he would encounter people with body armor and lances, and if he went west, "great riches and gain." The story is ridiculed by both Oviedo and Casas, who, however, do not explain why they find it impossible. In any case, Balboa could not go far in any direction until he had enough ships for his whole expedition. He did coast for thirty-five or forty miles south of Garachiné—a bearing the conquistadores continued to call "east" long after it must have been clear that the South Sea was south only of the middle Isthmus. He reached the harbor he named Puerto de Peñas (Port of Rocks),⁵ but did not land. It was getting dark when the bay was sighted and, Casas says, a school of whales close inshore looked like a dangerous reef; the ships waited out the night at sea, but in the morning the weather was bad and the pilots preferred to run for the Gulf.

Balboa disembarked in Chochama (Casas) or Pequeo (Andagoya)—the names are probably synonymous, another instance of the interchange of those of chieftains and their domains.⁶ Casas disposes of the stay there by saying that the adelantado spent "some days" in killing and robbing, and then returned to Terarequí; he adds that Balboa was animated by a desire to avenge Morales—all things considered, a singularly unlikely motive. Andagoya says that Balboa camped there for two months, collecting Indians to fetch pitch and cordage from Acla. A few days after landing he dispatched Valdarrábano and an escort to Darién with "the proceeds of his voyage," a report of progress, and yet another plea for a renewal of his asiento.

The messengers found official Santa María unexpectedly tense and hostile. The Governor was, even for him, in uncommonly evil humor—the end product of the frustration and insecurity which had started in June 1516, and which had been brought to a head about a fortnight before the men from the Pacific arrived.

For two years Pedrarias had lived in the shadow of dismissal and investigation. He had been put in his place by Cisneros, and it had been curtly specified that the place was subservient to the authority of three monkish reformers in Hispaniola. He had been censured, with Espinosa, for the expedition to Coiba; he had even been ordered to repatriate its captives and make restitution of its gold, and although the order had been quietly shelved on arrival, it might still rise to

plague him.⁷ In Spain his agents were ignored and his petitions suspended sine die. People had brought suits not dared before: Zorita, over the booty from Santa Marta and the gold stolen by Ayora; Zamudio, for restitution of the property he had left in Darién in 1511. He had sponsored Albítez, and Albítez had been turned down. A plan to recruit five hundred men in Castile for Tierra Firme, if it concerned Castilla del Oro (neither the name of the colony nor that of Pedrarias figures in it), had been soon abandoned.⁸

In April or early May, Albítez and sixty new settlers turned up in a chartered caravel, bringing news which presaged better things. Two months later a ship from Spain arrived with more ample information. It came to Pedrarias like sunshine after rain. Cisneros was dead; Carlos was in Spain; Fonseca was once more functioning. (The peculiar activities of Casas, now again in Castile, were as yet concealed.) The still omnipotent Flemish favorites, judging from their thriving trade in posts and preferment, might be disposed to put revenue ahead of righteousness. In Hispaniola the retirement of the much-tried Hieronymites was thought to be a matter of months, if not of weeks; in Cuba, Velásquez had dared to refuse to submit to a residencia by Zuazo. The King had acceded to Albítez' petition, and whereas this did not, as is sometimes stated, cancel Balboa's grants and privileges, it tacitly sanctioned trespass on them. Best of all, there was no word of another governor for Castilla del Oro.

One or two things were less satisfactory. The Hieronymites had written to Pedrarias to "let Vasco Núñez do what he wants," which meant that whereas the Governor could side-step a definite commitment to prolong Balboa's contract, he could not risk canceling it. And—more to Puente's sorrow than to the Governor's—Albítez, cheated by persistent quirks of timing, had no good of the royal consent to his plan. But these were no more than minor flaws in an otherwise pleasing whole.

And then, when Pedrarias had adjusted himself to confidence, the blow fell. On September first, Santa María learned that a new governor had been chosen for the colony.

A number of factors had contributed to the decision to remove Pedrarias—not least of them Casas, who spared no effort to that end. Fonseca had ceased to be a bulwark; it may be that at this time he

could not have rescued a discredited functionary even had he so desired, and in any case he did not choose to rescue Pedrarias: his answer to a renewed recital of the Governor's misdeeds had been a curt, "I have already said that we ought to throw that man out of there." (If he stuck to this opinion—and there is some evidence that he did not—Pedrarias was unaware of it, for he continued to christen new outposts in honor of the Bishop.) Formal appointment of the new executive had not yet been made, but his identity was an open secret. The Governor-designate was Don Lope de Sosa, since 1505 Governor of the Canary Islands.

Pedrarias concentrated his ill-humor on Balboa, a reaction as inevitable as it was illogical. Balboa had long since given up wishing for the Governor's removal, nor could his previous strictures (already outdated) have produced a change of administration by their own power. Even Puente and Corral, tireless in incitement against the adelantado, could brandish no recent faults beyond the indelicate failure to send Indians as gifts. Pedrarias' irritation over the letter received from the Hieronymites no doubt ricocheted against Balboa—it is one thing to concede a permit as a favor (with careful limitations in the fine print), and quite another to be ordered to do so as a duty—but it was scarcely a prime issue. Yet now, when the hatred he had cherished, openly or covertly, had no longer even rivalry to feed it, he was impelled to destroy Balboa, apparently as a scapegoat.

Only apparently. The real motives were more practical. The Governor had envisaged for years the delightful satisfaction of doing away with the object of his detestation, but what brought the aspiration to a crashing climax was the opportunism of crisis.

Pedrarias was due for a residencia, and he was perfectly aware that it could be extremely damaging even if Balboa were absent. With Balboa in attendance it might spell total ruin—or so, at least, seemed likely to the Governor, who even in calmer moments was not one to understand a mentality to which a buried hatchet was something interred for good. Treasonous defiance of the King's instructions, invasion and wholesale looting of another's gobernación, misprision, were only the beginning of the charges which could be brought against him, not to mention the claims for damages which could accompany them: had not Ovando, much less vulnerable, been sued by one optimistic

colonist for 260,000 pesos? In the circumstances, removal of Balboa seemed an elementary precaution.

This was not all. Pedrarias "was mad to get away before the Governor could arrive," but he had a very good idea that neither the vecinos nor the officials would allow it. It occurred to him that his problem would be in great part solved were he to be constructively occupied somewhere outside Castilla del Oro when Sosa reached Darién. The coveted and, indeed, the only possible field for this was the Pacific coast. The plan collided head-on with Vasco Núñez; *ergo*, Vasco Núñez must be eliminated. (Six years later, confronted with a similar emergency, Pedrarias repeated the stratagem to the letter.)

Circumstances played to Pedrarias' hand. Balboa had no inkling of his father-in-law's state of mind. Bishop Quevedo, believing his protégé safe, had left for Spain. And finally, ingenuous to the end, Balboa himself provided an excuse. As a pretext, it was good, perhaps, for a reprimand; Pedrarias and his confederates made it serve for judicial murder.

XXX

BALBOA learned of the supposedly imminent change of governors in November. Ironically, it was because it now seemed to him undesirable that he conceived an inoffensive project which his enemies branded as a revolutionary plot.

As he reasoned, Pedrarias was an ally—not, perhaps, a very constructive ally, but still, by virtue of a relationship not lightly entered into in that day, a permanent one. However hesitant in the past about giving Balboa free rein, now, when he was to lose his own gobernación, he would not ruin that of his daughter's husband just when it could become a family asset.

A new governor was a very different matter. He would undoubtedly summon Balboa to Santa María, if only because all executive officers were liable to investigation. He might take Balboa's troops for projects of his own, and cancel the expedition as primarily an initiative of Pedrarias; alternatively, he might try to take it over. In addition to

these considerations there was the almost certain risk that the expedition would disintegrate of itself. Many of his veterans, the hard core of his company, had lost much by reason of their friendship with him; they could not be expected to forgo the chance to recoup their fortunes in the residencia. They would go to Darién, and so would the greater part of their companions, who would want to ingratiate themselves with the incoming captain general and see what opportunities offered under his aegis.

Turning these things over in his mind, Balboa called a conference of his closest collaborators—"honorable men," Andagoya says, who he thought could be trusted to put the expedition before anything else. They met in the evening, in Balboa's hut, and evolved a simple plan, which went as follows:

Valdarrábano, Garabito, Muñoz, Botello, and Archdeacon Pérez would go to Darién to report progress and ask for aid. One of them, however, would push ahead to Acla, gain Balboa's house in secret, find out if Sosa had arrived, and backtrack to inform the others. If "Pedrarias, my lord" (the form of reference proper to a father-in-law) had not yet been supplanted, the delegates would proceed to Santa María, where, it was hoped, they would find help and encouragement. If, on the other hand, Sosa was already in residence, they were to turn back at once. Balboa would then take the expedition to found a settlement at Chepavare.

This was the extent of Balboa's "plot." Even Andagoya, the Governor's criado, and Tobilla, who was evidently free with charges and criticism as a rule, had nothing more damaging to record. The details which Oviedo recites as fact turn out to have been gleaned from hostile testimony in Balboa's trial, and will be considered in that context.

A settlement was obviously essential; its absence was Balboa's greatest weakness, and, once established, it could not be readily abandoned, much less abolished. Chepavare must have been selected for it with Albítez in mind, for with the news about the new Governor had come information that Albítez' license had been granted, and it was known that he had proposed to make his headquarters in Chepo. Chepavare was about fifteen miles from Chepo on the way to Panamá; if Albítez was still bent on his plan, he would find a prior establishment there inconvenient, to say the least.

The emissaries left with an escort of thirty-five men. Luis Botello was chosen to go ahead to Acla; entering the village after dark, he was spotted by a night watchman, arrested as a suspicious character, and hailed before the local magistrate. The magistrate was Francisco Benítez, the onetime *compañero* whose crass behavior to Nicuesa Balboa had punished with the lash. Seven years or so was no great time for a Spaniard to hold a grudge. Benítez extracted Botello's story from him, put him in irons, and happily informed Pedrarias of the affair.

The rest of the committee, hearing nothing from Botello, concluded rightly that Pedrarias was still in office, and wrongly, that they could advance with confidence. They went on to Acla, and were promptly detained.

Here was Pedrarias' pretext. After consultation with Puente, he hurried to Acla, leaving to the Treasurer the congenial task of compiling a bill of accusal calculated to damn Balboa from the outset of his career to date. He then wrote to his prospective victim "very delightfully, as a father," inviting him to come to talk over matters of common interest which would be to the advantage of the expedition. Balboa received this charming epistle early in December; if Casas is right, while engaged in an excursion to the island of Tortuga(?). To his simple mind it meant no more than it said, and he was eager to comply. Lest this seem artless to the point of stupidity, it must be kept in mind that Balboa was as ignorant of what had happened to his emissaries as he was of his father-in-law's sentiments and intentions. It is, however, regrettable that he was not a believer in astrology. Had he been truly superstitious, he might have guessed at a hidden menace, for he had been given a sign.

Years before, Messer Codro had sketched for him a certain conjunction of planets, and given him a solemn warning: When the stars stand *thus*—the Italian had said—you will be in mortal danger; if you escape, you will become one of the greatest captains in the Indies, but if not, you will be utterly destroyed. About the time Pedrarias' summons was delivered, Balboa saw the heavenly portent, and laughed at it. It only showed, he exclaimed gaily, how foolish it was to put one's faith in astrologers. Why, he had never been in better case in all his life. A day or so later he set out for Acla.

Among those who went with him were Andagoya, Bartolomé Hurtado, Andrés de Segovia (late of the Governor's guard) and the men who had brought Pedrarias' letter. The couriers were probably uninformed as to the scope of Pedrarias' intentions, but they knew that he was in a dangerous mood, and, of course, that the representatives of the South Sea Company were in custody. After a little they broke down and told Balboa. They risked a great deal in doing so; it must have been rather deflating when Balboa brushed aside their warnings, cheerfully replying that there could be nothing more than a misunderstanding, which would be dispelled as soon as he talked with the Governor.

Balboa may have felt more dubious about the triumph of virtue when, before reaching the way station, he met a heavily armed posse commanded by Pizarro, come to conduct him as a prisoner to Acla. Somewhat shaken, he addressed its leader reproachfully: "What does this mean, Francisco Pizarro? Not so were you wont to come forth to meet me!" Pizarro's reply presumably explained that the señor adelantado was to stand trial for treason.

In Acla first impressions were rather encouraging. The settlers welcomed him in a body. He was confined at first in the house of Juan de Castañeda, which, while less comforting than his own home, was much more so than the common jail to which he was later relegated. Hurtado was sent to the Pacific as interim commander, instead of some ambitious outsider. And Pedrarias came to visit Balboa, all suavity and reassurance: "Do not be mortified, my son, over this arrest and trial which I have ordered; for I have done so only to satisfy the treasurer, Alonso de la Puente, and to establish your loyalty clearly and beyond cavil."

Before long the gloves were off. In a second interview the Governor denounced Balboa furiously: he had betrayed the trust and paternal affection bestowed on him; he had plotted revolt against the King and his appointed representative in the colony. "Since you have sought to rebel against the Crown of Spain," Pedrarias concluded, "there is no reason to treat you longer as a son, but rather, as an enemy. Therefore, expect nothing from me save this, which I now declare."

Balboa defended himself with spirit. The accusations were wholly false, and the proof of his innocence was that he had come to Acla.

Had he ever conceived a plot, he need only have stayed at the Pacific, where he had men, ships and opportunity to put it into effect. Certainly undeveloped lands were not lacking to choose from. Instead, he had come at once, believing in the Governor's sincerity. Stung by the last two observations, Pedrarias flung out and ordered "more irons and guards for Vasco Núñez." The trial proceeded under forced draft to its forgone conclusion.

These were the chief artificers of Balboa's death, apart from Pedrarias and Puente, together with such of their motives as their contemporaries ascribed to them:

Corral: His motives are already known. He was Puente's agent and presented the accusations formulated by the Treasurer and counter-signed by the conformist Contador.

An unnamed sentry: This compañero had been on duty outside Balboa's headquarters when the plan was made to ascertain the situation in Darién. According to Casas, a sudden downpour had driven him to shelter under the eaves, when he had overheard, and misinterpreted, a fragment of the conversation within.

Espinosa: He is said to have made a secret pact to take over Balboa's ships and men once the Adelantado had been eliminated. It may be added that the plan was realized.

Garabito: He had been Balboa's companion and confidant, and, as one of the committee from the Pacific, was under arrest. He turned informer under promise of immunity and reward, offered him because of his willingness to lend the prosecution a helping hand. His antipathy to Balboa, a recent growth unguessed—need one say?—by its object, derived quite naturally from the fact that he had done a wrong to Balboa. Or rather, what is still more conducive to vindictiveness, he had tried to do a wrong, and failed. And the cause of it all was the daughter of Chief Chima of Careta.

The little girl had grown up; she was lovely and Balboa's mistress, and Garabito wanted her. (Garabito was an enterprising fellow where other men's women were concerned; in Hispaniola he had been knifed by Cortés for that reason.) In January, when he was in Acla with the Adelantado, he had done his best to break her resistance, telling her that she would soon be cast off; her lord had married the Governor's daughter. The argument was not without merit, for the Indian women

must have noted with disapproval the narrow exclusiveness of Spanish wives. But the girl merely repulsed her unwelcome suitor, and referred the whole affair to Balboa.

Balboa behaved as might be expected: he administered a sharp rebuke to Garabito, and dismissed the matter from his mind. Garabito assuaged his twice-wounded pride by writing to the Governor to point out that Balboa's affection and consideration for a native was an insult to Pedrarias' daughter and augured ill for his conduct as a husband, and, it is said, also to accuse his chief of subversive ambitions. Such a letter would explain why he was approached at once to serve the prosecution. No other of Balboa's companions (except the befuddled sentry) is known to have testified against him; indeed, no other adverse evidence, as distinct from the official accusations, is mentioned anywhere.

If evidence was scanty, not so the accusations. One packet included every criminal charge brought in Balboa's residencia, exhumed by order of Pedrarias.¹ There were those compiled by Puente with the collaboration of Corral, a certainly meaty compendium. There were charges that Balboa was guilty of "crimes, excesses, violence, and abuses . . . attempted or committed against the Indians"; specifically, that he had impressed innumerable natives to bring supplies from Acla, and that five hundred of them had died from overwork. (Casas says he was privately informed that the true number of victims was over two thousand.) Finally, there were the allegations concerning the recent "plot." Puente's composition, like the record of Pedrarias' secret inquiry of 1514 and those of the residencia, is not extant, and the records of the present trial soon disappeared, but one illuminating document has been preserved. This is an extraordinary recital of Balboa's crimes dictated by Pedrarias. It scorns details and supporting evidence, but in its sweeping way it appears to cover everything that could possibly—or, for that matter, impossibly—be alleged against the Adelantado.

Pedrarias had hoped to leave the onus of accusal on others, and to keep his instructions for a death sentence purely oral. When forced to go on record, however, the result was a masterpiece of misrepresentation. Much of it is absurd, a prize item being a passage which attributes Hojeda's misfortunes to Balboa, but on the whole it can be

judged as well by its omissions as by its statements. Purporting to be a précis of Balboa's life in the colony, it omits any reference to his appointment as interim captain-general in Darién and totally ignores those as adelantado and Governor—and, of course, the discovery which prompted them. It does refer to him as "the adelantado," but so far as any mention of his rights and privileges, of the King's instructions and the Hieronymites' orders is concerned, the title might have been a nickname bestowed in infancy. Vasco Núñez, in fact, appears as an upstart compañero who but for Pedrarias' forbearance would have been long since condemned to the extreme penalty, and whose command at the South Sea was purely by Pedrarias' favor.

The basic crimes for which Balboa deserved to die were, according to Pedrarias, insurrection, usurpation, sabotage, and high treason. The instances cited are these:

Balboa had been the chief cause of "the departure and death of Governor Diego de Nicuesa and of Bachiller Martín Fernández de Enciso and of the other governors who have come to these realms."

He had starved to death the veedor, Alonso Pérez, and then possessed himself of the veedor's stamp. (Pérez, who did not leave Castile until after June 5, 1510, died in Santa María on April 15, 1511. His death was known in Hispaniola and Spain, but no one suggested that Balboa was remotely responsible for it, or that his official stamp should have been buried with him.)

He had "maliciously and with intent to deceive" misled Pedrarias with false information and counsel, contrary to the interests of the Crown and the colony, and had thus brought about all the misfortunes, deaths, and failures of the entradas under armada captains.

Sent at his own insistence to conduct an expedition to Dabaibe, he had failed miserably because of his "notorious incompetence," by reason of which the colony was plunged into "hardship, trial, and want."

He was responsible for Tavira's death and the failure of the entrada (because he had talked so much of the riches of the upper Atrato), and hence, for the "unprecedented hardship and penury and debt" which resulted to the colony. (It will be remembered that Tavira paid his way to the tune of 8000 pesos, and that the colony had just been enriched by nearly a hundred thousand pesos in gold

and slaves; another 7800 pesos was declared from mines at about the same time.)

Balboa, not yet acquitted of the grave charges in his residencia, had "without Their Highnesses' license and authority, or mine," sent to Hispaniola and Cuba for troops, thereby provoking "great scandal and tumult in the city"; and but for his arrest at that time "would have rebelled and contrived to go away secretly as best he could, and he so attempted and endeavored."

He had grossly mistreated the Indians, in violation of Pedrarias' instructions and desires.

Balboa, being most guilty of the accusations brought by Enciso, and having "committed and perpetrated many crimes for which he deserved the gravest punishment," had been spared by Pedrarias in a magnanimous effort to transform him into a loyal servitor of the King. He had cynically betrayed the trust and comfort consistently given him by the Governor, repaying them with trickery and evil deeds.

Finally, Balboa had crowned years of indiscipline and treachery by shameless revolt. By Pedrarias' generosity he had been given the sixty men brought by Garabito and three hundred more of the finest troops; he had received the most patient encouragement; every effort had been made to reform his evil nature by kindness. The result had been black treason to the King and his representatives in Castilla del Oro.

There was one awkward weakness in the Governor's exposé. Why, when he had been convinced from the beginning that Vasco Núñez was a dangerous criminal and incompetent to boot, had he (a) resisted sending him to Spain for judgment, (b) accepted him as counselor, (c) relieved him of the criminal charges of the residencia, (d) made him captain of an expedition to Dabaibe? And—a more embarrassing question—why, just after receipt of what he claimed was proof of Balboa's duplicity and intention to rebel, had he married his daughter to him? And why did he then entrust him with the finest men in the colony for an expedition to the Pacific?

Pedrarias realized that something would have to be done about these glaring inconsistencies. Yet the facts which could account for them—the Sovereign's grants and favor to Balboa, and the exploits which provoked them; the chief justice's nol-pros conclusions as to

the criminal counts in the residencia; even the considerations born of the change of regime in Spain—were precisely those to be deleted at all costs. Thus, he could only insert long and unconvincing passages to the effect that his lenience, support, and bestowal of his child had been all a selfless endeavor to further the interests of the Crown and the well-being of the colony: in short, a noble sacrifice, basely frustrated. As explanations, they would not have satisfied a toddling child, but in the circumstances they were the best Pedrarias could find.

After reading this document Andagoya's laconic statement of Pedrarias' motives has a special flavor: The Governor was angry because Balboa had not sent him any slaves, and he did not like him anyway.

XXXI

THE case against Balboa, despite the plethora of accusation, hung on the alleged rebellion—or rather, on the allegedly intended rebellion—of the previous month. And although Oviedo says that he was also condemned for what he had done to Nicuesa and Enciso, the statement appears to be a wishful supposition rather than fact. According to the only direct record of the decision—a declaration by the chief justice himself—judgment was exclusively on the count of the recent “plot.”

A treasonable conspiracy which consisted in sending to find out if a new governor had arrived and, if he had, in avoiding contact with him until a settlement had been established, was scarcely adequate for Pedrarias' and Puente's purposes as it stood. Even the most willing court would experience a certain embarrassment in pronouncing sentence of death on such grounds, particularly when the accused was carrying out a royal mandate in territory where he had life tenure as adelantado for the King. The affair had to be embellished, at least enough to show that Balboa, who obviously had not revolted, meditated doing so.

It was therefore charged that the scheme had been for the messengers to return to headquarters with the glad announcement that Vasco Núñez had been named Governor of the whole land—or as Oviedo reported it, more picturesquely, they were to re-enter the camp shouting: “A reward! A reward for good tidings! Adelantado Vasco Núñez de Balboa is Governor of Tierra Firme!” They would then back up the proclamation with faked dispatches. Whereupon Balboa, “by force or guile,” would make off with the expeditionaries and the ships to set himself up somewhere else in defiant independence. It was added that the archdeacon had been instructed to bring back any non-conformist members of the emissaries’ escort in chains, which seems a large order for one priest.

That this was an infantile production, as full of holes as a grid, is beside the point: it was not too childish to send five men to the block. However, there is little object in discussing it, since we are told that the colonists—who undoubtedly explored every cranny of the circumstances of this *cause célèbre*—held it to be false. In fact, of all the accusations recorded against Balboa, the only ones that must be weighed are those regarding his treatment of the Indians. These are important: not because they figured in his death, but because if true, either his reputation and his own averments were a gigantic hoax, or he suffered a sea-change at the Pacific to become exactly the kind of captain he had consistently deplored.

The first proposition is ruled out by the evidence: it is inconceivable that Balboa’s known behavior was all a wily charade, acted with the connivance of a large number of native chieftains and persisted in when, after Pedrarias’ coming, it could do him nothing but harm in Santa María. But what of the second? People do change, all too frequently for the worse.

Now, there was nothing seraphic, or even starry-eyed, about Vasco Núñez de Balboa. It is impossible to be simultaneously a conquistador and a saintly pacifist. He had an independent mind, but it was still a mind of his century, not a fantastic throw-forward, so to speak, to the extreme of twentieth-century liberalism, and it was molded to the tenets and institutions of his time. He was convinced that Christian conquest of the Indies was God’s will, and Castile His instrument. Without doubt he would have considered many of Casas’ labor laws

(e.g., two pounds of meat a day for miners, three hours off for lunch, only native overseers) as kindness carried to excess, and the abolition of encomiendas to be thoroughly objectionable. When force was necessary to his ends, he used it without compunction, and he approved of enslaving cannibal or hopelessly recalcitrant tribes—and, of course, Africans, a point on which Casas warmly agreed.

His distinction was that he believed that the Spanish mission in the New World should be carried out with a minimum of oppression and dislocation. It was the distinction between Fagin and an essentially amiable Victorian parent who, accepting the cane as a necessary means of education, yet preferred to resort to it as seldom and as lightly as possible. Balboa said frankly that in his opinion consideration and kindness toward the Indians were good tactics, but he would not have thought so unless this jibed with his inclinations. He had the same attitude toward his own people. He had also declared that kindness was peculiarly "expedient" in the conquest and settlement of new territories—which is what he was proposing to do at the time he was said to have been perpetrating wholesale outrages.

In one particular he did change. At least so far as is known, his denunciations of abuses ceased when he became Pedrarias' son-in-law. He must have heard of Espinosa's brutal excesses in Coiba; there is no evidence that he commented on them. Although one can hardly see him refusing to marry the Governor's daughter, the fact remains that he *could* have done so, sacrificing his rights and ambitions in a noble gesture of protest—which, incidentally, would assuredly have been his last. It would have meant turning over the Pacific coast to the sort of exploitation he decried, but it cannot be claimed that this is what decided him. The indication is clear that he sold out his liberty to criticize for that to develop his gobernación in security.

When we come to his subsequent behavior, however, the evidence is that his character and methods did not alter. It is significant that when Pedrarias wished to punish the Indians of Careta for the killing of Olano, he had to send someone else to do it, and that, only after Balboa was well away from Acla.¹ On the other hand, this is no answer to the accusations to be examined, which were limited to his actions at the South Sea.

The charges were these: (1) that Balboa was consistently ruthless,

killing, capturing, and branding as slaves "innumerable" Indians (Pedrarias); (2) that he plundered, "probably" slaughtered and took captive large numbers of Indians, especially in Terarequí and Chochama—in the latter place, from a desire to avenge Morales (Casas); (3) that he sold Indians from the Pacific in Santa María, with or without a declaration as to their status (Oviedo); (4) that he caused the death of five hundred—or of two thousand—natives from overwork in bringing supplies from Acla (Oviedo, Casas).

Items 1 and 2 can be to some extent discounted: Pedrarias' mendacity on other points weakens anything he says, and he gives no instances, while Casas' general statements are the offhand kind he made when he did not know just what had happened and suspected the worst. We will look at them later. Item 3, about the sale of slaves, is easily disposed of. The official records of such sales have been preserved, and they prove that not one Indian from Balboa's expedition was declared or sold as a slave so long as he was alive. The only Indians from the South Sea Company who were ever auctioned in Santa María were sent after Balboa's death and by Pedrarias' authorization.² But the fourth charge is reasonably definite and better substantiated. Both Casas and Oviedo heard it in Barcelona in 1519. This was when Pedrarias' first communications about Balboa's "crimes" were received at Court, which by itself would seem enough to put it on the fiction list. But Casas cites as his source a confidential memorandum written by Quevedo, who was then in Spain, and says that the "true" figure of over two thousand killed in the work of portage was given to him by Quevedo's private secretary.

This would seem very nearly conclusive. But is it?

"The cleric," as Casas liked to call himself, was then engaged in a no-quarter fight against the agents of evil (anyone who disagreed with him) and in pursuit of a government-financed concession to colonize in his own way a thousand leagues of mainland coast "principally with the end of throwing Pedrarias out of Darién and all that mainland."³ He proposed to do this with fifty estimable friends from Hispaniola, several hundred Negro slaves, and some farmers. His Flemish protectors were extremely helpful, but otherwise the scheme was opposed, and Quevedo was one of the opposers. Although the Bishop later endorsed it, Casas was still angry enough after fifty years to

present him as a devil's advocate of dubious honesty ("it was believed that Diego Velázquez greased the Lord Bishop's palm").

There seems to be no doubt but that the Bishop did prepare another of his memorials exposing the cruelties to which the Indians had been subjected, or that, although it was confidential to the Throne, Casas' friends showed it to him before it was delivered to the King: he gives a graphic picture of taking it to the light of a taper to run through its pages. But the memorial is not extant, and the only bit of it Casas recalled was the item about Balboa. The questions then are: Was Casas' recollection in 1560 of a document hastily perused one night in 1519 infallible, though it was faulty on other things of that time? Did Quevedo single out the man he had championed, to whose qualities he had sworn by his holy consecration, for attack on what can only have been hearsay report—hearsay from people whose virtue and veracity he had impugned for years? If Casas portrays his own behavior to the Bishop accurately, he was insufferable; certainly he was identified with the foreign group detested by Castilian churchmen.⁴ How was it that Quevedo's private secretary was passing on to him damaging information which his chief had suppressed?

This said, the accusation remains. Does the statement that two thousand Indians, or even five hundred, died as porters stand up in the light of the facts we know?

Everyone agrees that the heaviest loads were carried by the expeditionaries themselves, both in the initial transfer and in the second major transportation of material after the flood at Río de la Balsa. No lumber was transported after September 1517, when native porters were lacking; it is repeatedly said that the anchors were carried by a crew of three Spaniards. Almost no provisions were taken from Acla (where the supply was small), because the expedition lived mainly off the country. This leaves little more than what might be called oddments: small gear, sailcloth, the cordage and pitch of which Andagoya speaks. And up to the time Balboa was summoned by Pedrarias, the quantity of these brought to the Gulf was moderate: Balboa's ships were very small and, since they are described as *fustas*, lightly rigged; only two of them had been completed, and for those on the ways in the Pearl Islands he was still organizing transportation of material. The standard load for an Indian porter was fifty pounds, and it is

sufficient to see what they carry today to explode the notion that packing it for a week over a trail improved, it was said, to the point where much of it was fit for horses could kill them.

No one suggests that every Indian on the job dropped dead. Even supposing a fifty-per-cent mortality, and that each conscripted Indian made only a single trip—an absurd hypothesis—and restricting the victims to five hundred, twenty-five *tons* of rope, pitch, and miscellaneous stuff would have been delivered; while by the same yardstick Casas' "true" figure of two thousand killed would give 200,000 pounds of freight transported. Bigger loads or a lower mortality would indicate quantities of porters and supplies before which even the cleric must have boggled.

Again—and this is pertinent to the general accusations—Balboa was operating in a populous region previously provoked to violent hatred of the Spaniards. Its tribes were allied and had demonstrated that they could be remorseless fighters when aroused: after Morales' rout, entradas had left the region severely alone. Balboa spent a year there. For the first five months only a third of his men were usually in camp at one time; the parties which went to Acla or foraged in the hinterland sometimes numbered around sixty men, sometimes no more than half that. In Chochama, scene of Morales' worst excesses and most crushing defeat, Balboa landed with a hundred men, but the number was immediately reduced by about a third when he sent the party to Darién with the October remittance of gold. Yet there is no mention of hostile Indians. In the whole fifteen months that Balboa passed at the Pacific his expedition did not suffer a single casualty.

Finally, we have the official record of the plunder. In the ten months before setting out from the Balsa, Balboa sent to Santa María 899 pesos and 3 tomines of gold, in five remittances averaging 180 pesos each, plus ten pesos' worth of pearls—results which Pedrarias must have attributed to willful negligence. In October he forwarded 2331½ pesos, bringing his total take in gold since starting from Darién to 3231 pesos. In all the accusations formulated by Pedrarias, Puente, and Co., there is no suggestion that Balboa embezzled or falsified the proceeds of his entrada; this, then, is all he got.

Reasoning from the evidence, one arrives at the following conclusions: that Balboa rounded up Indians for service, but that he did

not abuse them, much less slaughter them or sell them; that if any villages were occupied by force, it was the unvindictive kind, soon over, which the Indians understood and forgave; that he exacted tribute, but within rather modest limits. In other words, he continued to exercise that moderation which even the milder of Pedrarias' henchmen recognized to be political suicide, and remained the same sensible, fundamentally humane imperialist whose principles had made him a satisfaction to Fernando and a nuisance to the Governor.

Balboa's trial ran concurrently with that of his so-called accomplices Valdarrábano, Muñoz, Botello, Garabito, Argüello, and Father Pérez. Argüello had not been party to the scheme to send an exploratory mission to Acla, for the good reason that he was not then at the Pacific. He had, however, been Balboa's partner and representative; he had received letters from Balboa (contents unspecified), and at the time Pedrarias was refusing to decide either for or against a prorogation of the *asiento*, he had written to the Adelantado counseling him to persist in his enterprise and reminding him that it had been commanded by the Hieronymites to the service of God and the King. It was Pedrarias' habit to intercept, and frequently to impound, the colonists' private correspondence, and he had obtained possession of Argüello's letter. On these grounds Argüello was declared a traitor.

Since they were token trials, they went quickly. Before January twelfth, Espinosa had concluded them and pronounced all the defendants guilty. Garabito was pardoned in recompense for his helpful depositions; Balboa and the others promptly appealed to the Throne.

At this point Espinosa hesitated. He could judge a capital offense, but he could not legally pronounce sentence, much less execute it. The right of appeal to the King and his Council had been guaranteed to the colonists,⁵ and execution of the death penalty had been expressly prohibited in Castilla del Oro, except in fulfillment of a sentence emanated by this supreme judicial authority. Execution and public autopsy of a petty pilferer had been safe enough: the wretch was quite unimportant. Execution of Their Highnesses' Adelantado and Governor of the Coast of the South Sea was another matter. Even in Castile an adelantado could not be condemned save by the Sovereign and the Royal Council.

The alcalde mayor, his eye on the ships and men of the South Sea Company, was not averse to getting rid of their inconvenient commander. But he was understandably reluctant to take the responsibility for it. And he knew quite well that Pedrarias' oral instructions ("since he has sinned, let him die for it") would be no protection if a scandal developed. He therefore summoned the Governor to declare, before witnesses and by notarial act, what should be done with the prisoners and their appeals. He was careful to make clear in his writ that the trial had been held by command of the Governor, and that conviction had been on the count of contemplated rebellion. As to further proceedings the injunction was entirely neutral:

In order to be able to pass definitive sentence, His Lordship must consider whether he order that at least the case concerning the Adelantado Vasco Núñez in particular be remitted to Their Highnesses or the members of their most high Council, in view of the quality and title and eminence of his person; or, if he order that the Alcalde Mayor consider it and determine in all things according to the findings of the court, without making the said remand; or, what it be that he order with regard to the aforesaid.

Espinosa was credited, by Casas, with entreating the Governor to spare Balboa. Neither the text of the writ nor the alcalde's behavior bears this out. Espinosa had sole authority in judicial matters; he was empowered, or rather, obligated, to remand the prisoners to the King and the Royal Council. If he wanted mercy, he had only to do his duty under the law.

Pedrarias must have found his position infuriating; he had either to allow the appeals and fail in his objective, or subscribe to a legal public document which made him unequivocally responsible for the killing of a royal adelantado in blatant defiance of the law. But he had gone too far to turn back; it would be fatal now to allow Balboa to testify in Spain. He accordingly dictated the declaration of Balboa's crimes which we have already examined. Its conclusion—long, repetitious, and indicative of mounting emotion—was a categorical denial of the appeals and an urgent order to Espinosa to sentence Vasco Núñez and the other accused "with all haste and without any delay whatsoever . . . without stay or reprieve . . . to the extreme rigor

of the law; and having thus declared sentence . . . that you carry it to due effect and actual execution."⁶

Espinosa hesitated no longer—or only long enough to compose another document setting forth his remarkable merits and a pressing request that he be appointed to the soon-to-be-vacated post of commander of the South Sea expedition, and to have it signed by a number of the expeditionaries. Other petitions presented by deputies of Balboa's company, asking for pardon or admittance of the appeals, were set aside. A day or so after the alcalde's injunction and the Governor's reply, Vasco Núñez and his friends were condemned to death.

Sometime in the next week, between January 13 and 21, 1519, the Governor's commands were fulfilled.⁷ Father Pérez alone escaped, thanks to his cloth; he was turned over to the dean—a particular friend of Corral—who sent him in fetters to Spain. There he was acquitted, and in time he returned to Castilla del Oro. For the others, there indeed was "no stay and no reprieve."

The executions were, of course, public. They took place in the plaza.

It is easy to imagine the setting, so like a thousand tropical American hamlets today: the village square, overlarge because the prescribed size was calculated for eventual cities; the bordering houses, low, wide-eaved, standing shoulder to shoulder, flush with the street; the simple church; the green frame of forested hills, and over all that cobalt-and-cream sky which in those latitudes is an almost obtrusive part of every scene. And one can visualize the rest of the picture—the colonists in many-colored dress, the awed Indians huddled in the background, the flash and glitter of arms and armor where soldiers guarded a clear space at one side of the plaza. In the center of the space stood the block. It was an old, clumsy block, we are told, and before it stood a wooden trough to catch the severed heads.

The crowd was not large. There were not enough colonists in Castilla del Oro to pack a plaza; some were in Santa María, and over two hundred were at the Pacific. But we may be sure that everyone in Acla was in evidence—everyone, that is, but Pedrarias. There was none of the grisly holiday humor usually displayed at public executions in that day (and in our own); the people were uneasy and

affronted. "No one believed that Vasco Núñez was guilty," and from the Governor's references to the continuing state of ferment and insurrection in the "city," one may gather that they were kept in check only by a considerable show of force. They had probably been waiting for hours when Balboa appeared between his guards, "walking valorous and serene."

Balboa cheated his enemies of the cream of their triumph, for they had been unable to break his spirit. They could only kill him. As he advanced, the public crier went before, crying: "This is the sentence which the King our lord and Pedrarias his lieutenant in his name command be executed on this man, as a traitor and a usurper of the lands subject to the royal Crown . . ." and more of the same tenor.

"Vasco Núñez, hearing this as they led him forth, looked up and spoke: 'It is a lie, and perfidy, to say that I was in rebellion . . . Never has such a thing passed through my mind, nor did I think that such could be imagined of me. On the contrary, I have ever desired to serve the King as a loyal vassal, and to increase his dominions to the utmost of my capacity and strength.'

"His declaration availed him not at all. And thus, he having confessed and partaken of communion and put his soul in order as well as the time and the event allowed, they cut off his head."

The other victims were forced to watch. One by one they too were beheaded: first Valdarrábano the notary, then Botello, then Muñoz. When it came time to kill Argüello, it was already twilight. The shocked and sickened colonists fell on their knees, imploring mercy; God himself, they cried, had sent the night to put an end to slaughter. "Pedrarias was nowise softened, but rather replied with great passion": if they wanted that fellow to live, they must execute him instead. Argüello was beheaded. "And in this manner, amid the anguish and grief of all, and even some tears, those five perished that day." "And a pole was raised, on which the head of the adelantado was exposed for many days.

"And in a house that stood ten or twelve paces from the place where they were beheaded, one after the other like sheep, was Pedrarias, watching them between the canes which formed the wall of the house."

In blood and infamy a chapter of history had ended.

Epilogue

THERE is little more to tell of Darién. The sun and the birds had not finished with the gory thing nailed to the post in Acla before Pedrarias was at the Pacific to claim Balboa's gobernación. On January twenty-seventh he took ritual possession in Pequeo; two days later he performed an analogous ceremony at Terarequí, which he renamed Isla de Flores. He then returned to Acla and Darién,¹ and in May crossed again to the Pearl Islands, while Espinosa took a force by land to a rendezvous in Panama. In July he reluctantly handed over Balboa's ships and part of his company to Espinosa for another expedition to Coiba. In August he founded Panama.

(Seven years later he was capable of presenting the following statement in his residencia: that after Espinosa's first entrada to Parisa he, Pedrarias, "took the said troops and again prepared everything necessary, which was in the year 1517, and came to this coast of the south sea and pacified many of its chiefs and founded the city of panama and that of nata and built certain ships which he sent to explore westward . . .")

Pedrarias' choice of a site for his future capital, a spot a mile or so east of Old Panama, was possibly determined by the fact that it was just inside the domain of Chief Pacora, who—then aged thirteen—was easily held to complaisance. There is no other explanation for it since, as the colonists pointed out in vigorous protest, the location was

harborless, unproductive, and singularly unhealthy. The Governor overruled all objections. On August 15, 1519, he marked out the plan of the "city," and named it *Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Panamá*. He then returned to Darién, bent on quick dismantlement of Santa María.

At this point his program was held up by the refusal of the vecinos to abandon their homes and farms. As it turned out, the setback was not serious, for Lope de Sosa, arriving at Darién in May 1520, most opportunely died the same night. Pedrarias was happy to provide an elegant funeral, and to offer the most winning hospitality to Sosa's son, nephew, and other prominent followers. His most lavish attentions were reserved for Sosa's *alcalde mayor*, Alarconcillo. Within a month Alarconcillo, rescued from official limbo by an appointment as "lieutenant general of government" and quite literally eating from Pedrarias' hand, was warmly recommending that all Sosa's powers and privileges be vested in that noble servant of the Crown, Pedrarias Dávila, who "discovered the South Sea at great cost, and founded there the city of Panamá." At the same time, to the acid amusement of the colony, it was announced that Alarconcillo would take the *residencia* of his new patron, as of everyone else in official position. The royal officials refused to recognize Alarconcillo's authority, and the Governor's *residencia* was postponed; the other *residencias* were held in June and July.

Meanwhile, Doña Isabel had been sent off to Spain, her baggage heavy with the gold and pearls accumulated by her husband in six acquisitive years. Their young son Juan, who seems to have joined them a year or so earlier, stayed with his father.² To get the fortune safely away before it could be subject to the investigations and claims incidental to a change of administration had been an elementary precaution; besides, the *contador* of Hispaniola, Gil González Dávila, had turned up in Acla early in the year with a pouchful of unwelcome warrants and instructions, among them an order to audit and settle all Crown accounts in the colony from 1514 to date.

At the time the news of Sosa's death reached Spain (late in August) circumstances were favorable for Pedrarias. Charles, now Holy Roman Emperor, was again absent, and his Flemish counselors with him; the *comunero* risings which rocked Castile had begun; neither

well-meaning Adrian (left as Regent) nor the new grand chancellor, Gattinara, an Italian, was equipped to handle colonial affairs, and Fonseca was enjoying a return of influence; in the picture of the Indies, fabulous Mexico made Castilla del Oro—which so far had not produced one maravedí in revenue to set against years of trouble, controversy, and expense—look unimportant, something that could be attended to at a more convenient time. On September 7, 1520, Pedrarias was confirmed as Governor; three days later, Alarconcillo was authorized to conduct the residencias.

(Doña Isabel, whose remarkable talents as a lobbyist, backed by the gold she had brought from the Isthmus, were extraordinarily effective in Castile, is usually credited with achieving this victory. If so, she must have reached Spain before the date generally given for her arrival, that is, the early days of September. She was a clever, active, and determined woman, but she could not have reached Court in Valladolid, much less secured a decision and a brevet, in three or four days.)

Due to the comunero rebellion, there was a long interval in which no ships came to Castilla del Oro; the cédulas of September 1520 appear to have been delivered in Darién on July 1, 1522. Pedrarias' residencia was held in August and September. Its course was smoothed by advertisement of an impending distribution of Indians among the colonists: a neat, if obvious device which was most effective, especially as the awards were not made until after the residencia had been brought to a happy conclusion. On October seventh, Pedrarias emerged from his figurative ordeal whitewashed pure as any lily; on October twelfth, the encomiendas were signed and sealed.

In the latter part of 1525 it was learned that another Governor, Pedro de los Ríos, had been appointed for Castilla del Oro. What happened then is strangely familiar. Pedrarias had sent Captain Francisco Hernández de Córdoba to subdue and colonize Nicaragua—the object being to snatch the territory before Gil González, who had just explored it, could get it as a gobernación. Now, acting on reports that Hernández contemplated revolt, Pedrarias went to Nicaragua, had the captain beheaded out of hand, and when Ríos arrived was well ensconced in a region outside his successor's jurisdiction. Again it worked; and again full success came with the sudden demise of a

regularly appointed governor before he could occupy his post—in this case, that of Gil González. In 1527, Pedrarias was named Governor of Nicaragua. Old, infirm, frequently bedridden, he pursued unabated a career which might be called, Oviedo-style, “of the four g’s”: greed, grab, graft, and gangsterism. He died in office, aged nearly ninety, on March 6, 1531.

Pedrarias’ long survival was a political marvel as well as a physical one. He was denounced—at safe distance, in Spain, but with increasing boldness—for practically every kind of misconduct possible to an executive: extortion, malversion, fraud, intimidation, falsification of records, interception of mails, illicit pre-emption of land and encomiendas, arrogation to himself of royal preserves (specifically, Isla Rica and Otoque with their pearl fisheries and over eight hundred Indians), systematic brutality to the natives and mistreatment of Crown representatives, an organized private slave trade in “free” Indians, attempts at forceful annexation of the contested territories of Honduras and Guatemala—to name only the high points. Oviedo declared that two attempts to assassinate him (one nearly successful) were made on the Governor’s order; rumor said that the deaths of both Quevedo’s successor, Bishop Peraza, and Espinosa’s successor, Salaya, were from poison administered at his instigation. In the residencia he underwent after Ríos took over, despite a ruling secured by Doña Isabel which ordered that everything prior to 1522 be excluded from it, investigation was on forty-seven counts of malfeasance, resulting in indictment on twenty-three—exclusive of Oviedo’s accusations and other personal complaints. Yet he emerged unscathed, and was favored to the end.

The triumph belonged to that accomplished lady, Doña Isabel. Evidently subscribing to the theory that the best defense is to attack, she made her most exaggerated requests for concessions and rewards when her husband was under particularly heavy fire, and events proved her right: she not only saved Pedrarias; she obtained for him special recompense. And after his death, when she claimed utter destitution, she received unusual grants and allowances in recognition of his services. Her claim to abject poverty could have been rather easily disproved, but it was not contested.³ She was, by that time, an intimate friend of Charles’ young Empress.

Doña Isabel did not get quite all she asked for: a requested Nicaraguan fief of 1700 square miles was whittled down to a paltry 488 square miles with 2000 Indian vassals, and her plan to have her son, Arias Gonzalo (aged twenty-two), succeed his father was turned down. These, however, were only temporary checks. A few years later the gobernación of Nicaragua was bestowed on her son-in-law, Rodrigo de Contreras y de la Hoz. Contreras had married María, Balboa's phantom bride, who seems to have been not unworthy of her heredity; together they made the colony something close to a family preserve. Doña Isabel rounded out her achievements by marrying her youngest daughter to Hernando de Soto, when that caballero returned from Peru with 100,000 pesos of gold, and aiding him to secure the governorship of Cuba and Florida. Finally, Arias Gonzalo was created Count of Puñoenrostro.

Whatever passing anxiety Pedrarias may have experienced over exposure of his sins, he had no serious worry with regard to his treatment of Balboa. The Governor had things well in hand in Castilla del Oro. The almost total omission of any reference to Balboa in letters and reports of the years following his execution is so unnatural that it fairly shouts of a taboo laid on the very name of the Adelantado, observance of which was a *sine qua non* of life, liberty, and the pursuit of fortune in the colony. (A typical illustration of how this worked is a declaration of merits submitted in hope of favors by a conquistador whose chief title to consideration was his participation in both Balboa's expeditions to the Pacific. Handling an awkward problem with tact, he glides rapidly over that of discovery and describes the second thus: "Your Lordship commanded that four ships be built at the South Sea, which were built by various compañeros . . .") Any infringements of the taboo were apparently taken care of by the editing of official papers, censorship of private correspondence, and outright subtraction of inconvenient documents. Oviedo asserts that the main reason for the Pedrarias-inspired attempts on his life was that he had read, numbered, and countersigned every page of the records of Balboa's trial. As soon as he released the papers, the court notary rushed with them to Pedrarias in Panama—after which they appear to have been permanently mislaid.

Nevertheless, something got through to Spain. At first the guilt of

Balboa and his co-victims had been accepted on the authority of official reports from Santa María.⁴ But on April 11, 1521, a *cédula* of the Regency ordered that in view of Adelantado Vasco Núñez' great services to the Crown, his Indians were to be given to his brother Gonzalo. It was, of course, ignored (Pedrarias had long since assigned Balboa's Indians to Doña Isabel and a few deserving pets), but Charles reiterated it two years later, after his return to Castile. And on July 4, 1523, the Emperor dictated a *cédula* on the subject which is interesting in more ways than one.

The *cédula* is addressed to "our Governor of Castilla del Oro." In it, Charles states that he has been informed by Gonzalo de Balboa that Pedrarias Dávila, lieutenant general, "caused the said adelantado to be beheaded, out of envy, unjustly and without his being guilty in any way, in order that his services to us in that land, both in colonizing it and in discovering the South Sea at his own cost, might not be evident." After a discussion of the matter in Council, it had been resolved to refer it for judicial action to the Governor of the colony. "Therefore I command you," Charles continued, "to investigate the aforesaid at once, and, having summoned and heard the parties, to render and administer complete and plenary justice so that neither party receive injury of which they have reason to complain."⁵

Beyond showing that the Emperor, after his return to Castile in 1522, was at least disposed to entertain the idea that Balboa's execution was a deliberate miscarriage of justice, the *cédula* is significant for another, and overlooked, feature. It is, beyond question, directed to a Governor of Castilla del Oro who is not Pedrarias—at a time when by all accounts that caballero was in full and unshaken possession of his post. Ergo, there is a large hole in the accounts, and another *cédula* of neglected significance indicates what is missing. This is dated April 19, 1523, and it is addressed to a lieutenant general of Castilla del Oro named "peran zures de auilanzo" (Pedro Anzures de Avilanzo), instructing him to attend to certain matters previously confided to Lieutenant General Pedrarias. For some reason the appointment of Avilanzo was vacated (Doña Isabel again?) and another governor was not named until two years later, but the fact remains that in 1523 Pedrarias was, on paper, already supplanted—which explains a minute change in his title that altered its meaning from

"one who governs as deputy of the king" to "deputy governor."⁶

Valdarrábano's heirs were also active, and since Espinosa was conveniently at hand in Castile, they demanded that he be condemned "to civil and criminal penalties" for his part in the death of Valdarrábano. In consequence, a *cédula* of April 1525 ordered Alarconcillo to send to Spain the original records of the trials together with two authenticated copies, made up into duplicate sets to be dispatched by different ships to ensure their safe receipt. Nothing seems to have come of this. It is probable that Alarconcillo's death took place before it was delivered, and it may be assumed that if Pedrarias was prepared to have Oviedo killed because he had checked the papers in question, he did not now dutifully send them off in triplicate. One may guess that if he had not already destroyed them, the oversight was rectified at this time.

No further action by Balboa's family is known. His brothers were painlessly removed from Spain: warmly recommended by the Emperor to Cabot—still in consideration of Vasco Núñez' signal merits—all three sailed with Cabot's armada to the South Atlantic in 1525, taking a nephew, another Gonzalo, with them. Gonzalo senior was treasurer of the ship *Trinidad* and fourth in line for commander of the expedition. He was killed, with brother Juan, at the Río Paraguay. The youngest brother, Alvar, who was *veedor* of *Trinidad*, got home safely, but, being a peace-loving fellow who hid in his cabin when intraexpeditionary quarrels became violent, he was not the man to battle potentates and powers in a forlorn cause.⁷

In Castilla del Oro the muzzled believers in Balboa's innocence were delighted, and those who had doubted it converted, by a Sign. It was vouchsafed in Acla.

On a Sunday morning in July 1522, Garabito—then Pedrarias' lieutenant in command of the settlement—was standing outside his lodging with a group of colonists, idling away the interval between church and dinner. Near by stood the post on which Balboa's head had been exposed; it now bore a newly affixed notice of Pedrarias' impending *residencia*, generally recognized as a farce designed to exculpate the Governor all along the line. "And there entered on the far side of the plaza fifteen or twenty hacks or mares, and began to graze . . . And, those animals being well distant, there came out

from among them a stallion which had belonged to the Adelantado Vasco Núñez, and his head high, rapidly and without pausing to graze or to study where he was going, after walking more than a hundred paces he came directly to where the notice or edict was posted, and seized hold of it with his teeth two or three times and tore it to pieces. And having done this, he walked . . . directly back to where he had started from."

When Balboa was killed, Darién was condemned. The vecinos had balked Pedrarias' plan to abandon it in 1519, and when Oviedo returned in 1520 (much disconcerted by Pedrarias' accidental continuance in power) he made himself the spearhead of resistance to the Governor on that issue. For a time he seemed successful; Pedrarias, who had the residencia in mind, yielded the point and offered to make Oviedo his deputy in command of Santa María—an offer which the veedor, induced by certain material considerations, very foolishly accepted. He soon realized that he had been duped. The almost effective second try at assassinating him, and still more, the fact that he had contrived to have the would-be murderer punished before Pedrarias' agent, sent posthaste from Panama, could rescue him, counseled Oviedo to make his escape lest a worse thing befall him. Again in Spain, he obtained in 1525 a cédula which forbade the abandonment of Santa María; by that time, however, it was too late to save it.

Even before Oviedo's flight many residents of Darién had yielded to the pressures and promises which Pedrarias knew so well how to employ. In 1524 the Governor administered the *coup de grâce*. He went to Darién, persuaded Bishop Peraza to transfer to the dismal hamlet euphemistically designated "the Great City of Panama"—which, incidentally, was not yet a diocese—forced the remaining vecinos to leave, and stripped Santa María of everything in the way of installations and equipment, sending to Panama all that could be transported and destroying the rest. According to Oviedo, destruction of the settlement was an obsession with the Governor because it was, in a sense, a memorial to Balboa.

Thus in September 1524, Santa María del Antigua was a desolation inhabited only by a few people too sick to undertake a journey else-

where—expendables whose fate was a matter of indifference—and by one immovable die-hard: Diego Ribero, the mariner whose timely insubordination had brought about the rescue of Nicuesa and his castaways in 1510. Whereupon, as might have been foreseen, the Indians swooped joyfully on the defenseless remnant, killed Ribero, his household, and the invalids, and gave the wrecked settlement to the flames. In a few months the eager jungle had already reached out to cover the flimsy ruins; quite soon only some choked citrus trees in a patch of second-growth forest remained to mark the site of the capital of the first mainland colony in the Americas.

Santa María was never rebuilt. The name "Darién" was extended to all the territory westward to the Pacific, and in the end passed altogether from the Caribbean province. The true Darién, that of Cemaco and Balboa, is now the Colombian municipality of Acandí. It has 868 buildings in its 2730 square kilometers, and 3261 inhabitants. Outside of banana boats and contrabanders, its communications consist of a postal launch which, weather and other circumstances permitting, makes a weekly trip from Nicoclí, an only slightly less cutoff village on the eastern coast of the Gulf of Urabá about where Bastidas traded with the Urabae and Hojeda founded San Sebastián. Nature still guards its isolation. It has not a mile of road; indeed, the whole political division to which it belongs (the Department of Chocó), stretching south in mountains, swamp, and jungle far beyond the farthest explorations of the captains and *compañeros* of Santa María, has barely a hundred and twenty-five miles of road, recently acquired, although indomitable enterprise is doggedly pushing a highway from Antioquia to the Gulf. Remote, rugged, forest-clad, it is all much as it was nearly four and a half centuries ago, when a few hundred adventurous men from Castile took a corner of it to build a town and shape their arrogant dreams of subjugating half a world.

The two decades which followed the executions in Acla were crowded with dazzling conquests. Spanish exploration and occupation from Mexico to the borders of Chile, with the fantastic riches and internecine rivalries which accompanied them, Spanish circumnavigation of the globe and the resultant controversy with Portugal, Spanish efforts against the challenge of immense territories yet unwon, blazoned the triumphs and trials of the Golden Age. In this vast land-

scape of dominion the vanished pinpoint which had been Darién seemed lost indeed.

That it still shines in men's minds when other founding settlements are dim or forgotten has little to do with its year-by-year events, which are seldom considered; it is not even because it was the first continental colony in the New World, or because its conquistadores "went out from it for all that was done thereafter." It endures because of Vasco Núñez. If it died with Balboa, it also lives through him—one and indissoluble in achievement, defeat, and that remembrance which is the ultimate guerdon of history.

APPENDICES

Appendices

I

SOME CASTILIAN WEIGHTS AND MEASURES WITH APPROXIMATE EQUIVALENTS

Linear

Dedo .....	.685	inches
Pulgada .....	.914	inches
Palma (12 dedos)	8.22	inches
Pié (12 pulgadas or 16 dedos)	10.968	inches
Codo común (2 palmas)	16.44	inches
Codo real, or de ribera (used in shipbuilding)	23.37	inches
Vara (36 pulgadas or 48 dedos)	32.89	inches
Estado	5.5	feet
Brazo	5.5	feet
League, land or "Castilian" (3 Roman miles)	2.76	statute miles
League, marine or "Portuguese" (4 Roman miles) .	3.68	statute miles

N.B. Today, when the metric system is generally used, the vara is generally considered equivalent to 80 centimeters, and the (land) league to 5 kilometers; a pulgada means an inch. Stevens (1702) reckoned the codo real at 22.687 inches, from a vara of 33 inches.

Weights

Grano .....	.048	grams
Tomín (12 granos) .....	.575	grams
Adarne (3 tomines)	1.725	grams
Peso (8 tomines)	4.6	grams
Onza (50 tomines)	28.754	grams
Marco (8 onzas)	230.03	grams
Libra (16 onzas, or 100 pesos)	{ 460.06	grams
	{ 1.014	lbs. avoird.
Arrelde (4 libras)	4.057	lbs. avoird.
Arroba (25 libras)	25.356	lbs. avoird.
Quintal (100 libras)	101.425	lbs. avoird.
Bota or pipa (wine casks containing 27½ arrobas), 750 libras gross	760.686	lbs. avoird.
Tonel (1⅓ botas), 1250 libras gross	1267.81	lbs. avoird.

N.B. The tonel (cask) was used with reference to ships and freight in the same way as the British tun—to which, however, it was not equivalent—and hence usually as a unit, real or conventional, of cubic measurement. See Appendix III.

Liquid Measure

Cuartillo .....	.53	qts.
Azumbre (4 cuartillos)	2.13	qts.
Cuartilla (2 azumbres)	4.26	qts.
Cántara (4 cuartillas)	4.26	gals., U.S.
Bota or pipa (27½ arrobas, water or wine)	83.45	gals., U.S.
Tonel (1⅓ botas)	139.09	gals., U.S.
Tonel macho—"male" tonel (2 botas or pipas)	166.9	gals., U.S.

Dry Measure

Cuartillo	1.018	dry qts.
Celemín or almud (4 cuartillos)	4.07	dry qts.
Cuartilla (3 celemines)	12.21	dry qts.

Hanega (4 cuartillas), grain	48.864 dry qts.
Halda—sack containing 5 arrobas grain	1.95 bu.

Area

Solar, colonies (lot 50 x 100 piés)	45.7 x 91.4 feet
Solar de caballería (lot 100 x 200 piés)	91.4 x 182.8 feet
Fanega or fanegada—area required for sowing one hanega of grain; today, .64 hectare	1.58 acres
Huebra—area which could be ploughed in one day by a man with one yoke of oxen	

Sources: Leyes (1538), fol. cclxxv; Leyes (1581), Libro V, Título xiii: "Of Weights and Measures"; Haggard, *Handbook for Translators*; Hamilton, *American Treasure*.

II

CURRENCY AND PRICES

The currency of Castile was reformed and stabilized in June 1497. Thereafter the three standard coins were the *maravedí* (of a copper and silver alloy called *vellón*), which was stipulated as the unit of reckoning in official and commercial transaction, the silver *real*, and the gold *excelente de Granada*, or *ducado* (ducat), 23¾ carats fine. The coinage was authorized also of half, quarter, and eighth reales, of half maravedies called *blancas*, of half and double ducats and (in limited quantity) of pieces of 5, 10, 20, and 50 ducats. The *castellano* was no longer coined, but continued to be a money of account, chiefly in the Indies, as the equivalent of a peso of gold, the hundredth part of a Spanish pound of 460.06 grams. Technically worth 450 maravedies, the castellano or peso was in fact subject to fluctuation and was convertible under par in the colonies.

(The maravedí cited in old codes was a gold coin. On the basis of the laws cited by Hugo de Celso (Leyes [1538], fol. ccxxi), and ignoring Celso's own arithmetical aberrations, the standard gold maravedí of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was worth 165 of the "modern"

vellón maravedies; and a special maravedí called, variously, "old," "good money," or "King's" maravedí, used in calculating legal penalties, was worth 990 "modern" vellón ones.)

The value of Castilian money following the reform of 1497, in terms of U.S. currency today, is as follows:

<i>Coin</i>	<i>Equivalent, maravedies</i>	<i>Equivalent, U.S.</i>
Maravedí		\$.01
Real	34	.354
Ducado	375	3.91

What the real comparative value was—as purchasing power—is a more difficult question. Here are some examples, taken from documents of the first two decades of the sixteenth century, with special reference to the administration of, or voyages to, the New World colonies:

ITEM

<i>Salaries (yearly)</i>	<i>Maravedies</i>	<i>U.S. Currency</i>
Governor of a colony	366,000	\$3,714.50
Treasurer of a colony	200,000	2,084.40
Veedor of mines and smelting	70,000	728.50
Pilot major of Castile	75,000	781.00
Indies pilot, first class	35,000	364.25
Military captain, colonies	48,000	500.00
Able seaman (plus food)	11,000	115.00
Ordinary seaman (plus food)	7,300	76.00

Prices (average)

Wheat, per bushel	294	3.06
Ship's biscuit, per quintal	500	5.21
Salt mackerel, per barrel	1,550	16.15
Bacon, per lb.	8	.08
Olive oil, gallon	35	.36
Wine in bulk, low grade, gallon	8	.08
Wine in bulk, good quality, gallon	38	.40
Linen crash, yard	38	.40
Fine French lawn, yard	3,600	37.51
Silk velvet, yard	850	8.86
Shirt, plain	160	1.67

	<i>Maravedies</i>	<i>U.S. Currency</i>
Doublet, plain	675	\$ 7.03
Building nails, per 1000	1,300	13.54
Iron, sheet or bar, per cwt.	496	4.17
Tin, per cwt.	525	5.47
Copper, per lb.	22	.23
Cordage, per cwt.	1,270	13.25
Sailcloth, per piece	1,500	15.63
Mule, medium quality	8,000	83.38
Stallion	30,000	312.66
Saddle, ornamented velvet, gilt nails	3,285	34.24
Slave (Negro)	12,000	125.00
Passage, Spain-Hispaniola, with food	3,000	31.27
Passage, Spain-Hispaniola, de luxe	5,500	57.32
Freight, Spain-Hispaniola general merchandise per tonelada	2,200	23.93
Freight, Spain-Hispaniola, cow or yearling	1,700	17.70
Charter ship to Indies, per tonelada	4,000	41.68
Charter, round trip to Indies, per tonelada	6,500	67.55
Caravel, to purchase, per tonelada	3,000	31.26
Rent small house, year	3,600	31.26
Rent "elegant residence," year	75,000	781.00

Despite violent fluctuations from year to year in commodity prices, the general level was practically unchanged in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. In the colonies, of course, scarcity prices were the rule at first: in Hispaniola at the height of the 1502-1504 gold rush, they were from four to six times those of Spain—except for mining tools, which were anything the traffic would bear, e.g., \$70 for a pickax. In Darién pork sold for about 48 cents a pound and beef for 58 cents. Thirty years later Hispaniola had so many more cattle than inhabitants that beef was worth only a cent a pound.

Source: Leyes (1581), Libro V, Título xxi: "Of Money and Coinage"; Leyes (1538) fols. ccxxi, ccxxxiii, ccxxxiiii, cclxxv, cclxxvi; Hamilton, *American Treasure*; statements in contracts, accounts, reports, etc., between 1495 and 1520.

III

SOMETHING ABOUT SHIPS

The three kinds of ships used for voyages to, or exploration of, the New World during the first decades of discovery and conquest were the nao, the caravel, and the bergantín. The first was a large, square-rigged vessel, technically identical with the carrack of Venice; the Castilians, however, seem to have applied the term nao—which merely meant “ship”—to any good-sized square-rigger; bigger than average caravels, which were still a lot smaller than true carracks, were so designated. Bergantines were very small; they could be rowed as well as sailed, were sometimes decked and sometimes open “in the manner of pinnaces,” and could be carried aboard a fair-sized caravel to be put in the water once the Caribbean was reached. However, bergantines also faced the Atlantic under their own power: gallant little tubs scurrying between Spain and the Indies in tiny and triumphant challenge, a yardstick for Spanish seamanship, not so much because men sailed them across the Ocean Sea as because no one particularly remarked their daring. Easy to careen, the bergantines often outlasted their larger sisters, and saved many an armada from total loss when naos and caravels failed.

The caravel, the typical, maid-of-all-work ship, was a modern development, evolved by Portugal but early adopted by Castile. The Portuguese built it lateen-rigged; the Spaniards usually preferred it square-rigged, but since each type had its merits and shortcomings, King Fernando liked armadas to include both. An expert description of them, and of how they were sailed, is given by Morison in his *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*; see also Frederic C. Lane's *Venetian Ships and Shipbuilders of the Renaissance*.

The size of ships was expressed in terms of burthen—specifically, of the cubic cargo space below decks. The unit of measurement was, as in England, the largest size of wine cask. In England, this was a tun, and in Castile, a tonel, and the names of smaller casks also corresponded—pipe, *pipa*; butt, *bota*. The catch is that the capacity of the similarly named casks was different: a Castilian tonel held only a little more than half the amount in an English tun—to be precise, 55.2 per cent. In England the tun (252 gallons or 33.7 cubic feet content) became the shipping ton of

42 cubic feet, by allowing an additional 25 per cent for the cask and space lost in stowage. If the Castilians followed the same practice, their 139-gallon tonel worked out at a "shipping tonel" of roughly $23\frac{3}{4}$ cubic feet—but we do not know that they did so.

At the time of our story "tonel" and "tonelada" were synonymous. There was also, however, a "male" tonel or tonelada, equal in capacity to two botas or pipas. Before long this masculine measure, roughly reckoned as 1.2 toneles, became the official tonelada: 166.9 gallons, 22.3 cubic feet net, and 66.2 per cent of an English tun.

It is clear that to speak of a tonel—even a male one—as a "ton," or to translate *tonelaje* as "tonnage," is misleading. This, alas, is about all that is clear, and it is not much help in determining the size of the caravels used by the discoverers. And the laws on shipbuilding and tonelaje promulgated a century later (1615–1618) are equally frustrating. They look wonderful: that which establishes standard dimensions for ships provides a table of measurements with corresponding burthens, as well as formulas for calculating the cargo capacity of any vessel and its rating in toneladas. (It even tells how to get the prescribed proportions with the aid of a piece of string, the ancient system which I have seen used with perfect success by builders today.) The standard tonelada is fixed at two pipas or botas, and the conventional gauging tonelada at eight cubic *codos de ribera*. Yet it all comes to pieces in the hand if one tries to use it as a guide to ships of the early sixteenth century.

The burthen equivalents in the table of specifications do not agree with those produced by the (theoretically) corresponding formula. The table contemplates nothing smaller than a ship of $80\frac{3}{4}$ toneladas (17' 6" in the beam and 66' 2" overall), and if worked backward in the same ratios results in absurdity, such as a 41-foot ship with a depth from deck to keel of 35 inches and a rating of about $7\frac{1}{2}$ toneladas. The formula for finding the official tonelaje of ships which did not conform to the legal standard is of course useless, since it presupposes knowledge of the exact measurements to start with. Finally, not only were seventeenth-century ships constructed differently from those which interest us, but they were rated by a different gauge: the eight-cubic-codo tonelada (59 cubic feet) was twice the space needed to stow two $83\frac{1}{2}$ -gallon pipas.

(Happily, one source of possible confusion can be ignored in so far as the question at hand is concerned: the arbitrary tonelada equivalents decreed for various kinds of merchandise and packing, e.g., 36 bushels of wheat = one tonelada; 80 three-gallon bottles of oil = one tonelada; general merchandise in cases, anything from 25 to 42 cubic feet = one

tonelada. These were conventions established for purposes of safety and for reckoning freight charges and taxes.)

Faced with a problem which has baffled experts, I have evolved a private method for estimating the size of the caravels used for the Indies at the time of our story. It is intricate and scientifically execrable, and I have no intention of expounding it. It does, however, give quite reasonable results, which have the added advantage that no one can disprove them: for example, about 70 feet overall for an 80-tonel ship; roughly 46 feet overall for those 30-tonel caravels which bravely plied the Atlantic.

See: Leyes de Indias, Vol. III: Libro IX, Título xxviii, "Of the . . . building and fitting of ships, and their burthen," Título xxxi, "Of cargo-gauging and freightage"; Leyes (1581), Libro V, Título xiii, "Of weights and measures"; Veitia Linaje, *Norte de Contratación*; contemporary documents, specifically the contracts with Juan Aguado (1495) quoted by Angel Ortega, *La Rábida*, II, 282, and with García Alvarez (1496), Muñoz Transcripts, N.Y., Rich 5, and the cédula of 1513 in Serrano, p. cccxvii n; Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, Vol. I, chap. 9, and notes. A few other sources, out of the very extensive literature on the subject, are cited in the Bibliography of this book.

Chapter Notes and Principal Sources

NOTE ON REFERENCES

The abbreviations of the titles of collections of documents and laws used in the notes are indicated in the Bibliography. Works repeatedly referred to by the author's name, without title, are marked in the Bibliography by an asterisk.

CHAPTER I

1. There was as yet no national capital of Castile. Isabel and Fernando were peripatetic sovereigns, moving their Court from place to place as circumstances dictated.

2. Only the title of Admiral was declared hereditary in the original grant. Extension of the right of inheritance to the other titles and privileges was expressed in later cédulas, which, in view of the fact that perpetual grants of offices involving judicial or civil administration were forbidden by law, provided a pretty point of issue in litigation between Columbus' heirs and the Crown. For the interminable wrangles over Columbus' privileges, see Schoenrich, *The Legacy of Christopher Columbus*.

3. See the anonymous memorial from Hispaniola (1515-1516?) apparently by a friar or priest (DIRD, II, 247-64); report of Martín Fernández de Enciso, 1516 (DIRD, X, 549). The suspicion probably arose from the

intention Columbus had at this time, and later abandoned, of bequeathing to the government of Genoa one tenth of the income from his estate and privileges (Torre, p. 309).

4. Hispaniola was the name coined by Martyr for the island of Haiti and Santo Domingo. The Castilian name for it was La Isla Española (The Spanish Island), or more simply, La Española.

CHAPTER II

Principal Sources

Bastidas' voyage: Oviedo, Bk. III, chap. 8; Bernáldez, chap. cxvii; Casas, Bk. II, chaps. 2, 5; DIRDU, II, 262-66; VII, VIII, XXI, *passim* (testimony in the Pleitos de Colón); DIRD, II, 362-467; XXXI, 137, 230, 243-44; XXXIX, 61ff.; 331-427, *passim*; DIHHA, VI, 69-77; X, 3, 15, App. I; XIV, 51; Navarrete, *Viages*, II, 28, 244-46, 416-20; III, 538-91, *passim*; DSCC, Pt. III, Vol. II, p. 120; Leguina, App. III; Leyes (1538), fols. 10, 242; Guevara, *Epístolas familiares*; declaration by Bastidas, March 27, 1503 (MS in archives of Santa Marta, Colombia).

Balboa: Casas, Bk. II, chaps. 5, 62; Bk. III, chap. 39; Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, Proemio, chap. 2; see also sources of Note 2 below.

Bishop Fonseca: Guevara, *Epístolas familiares*; Alcocer, *Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca*; see also chronicles and genealogies referring to this period in Castile.

Maritime laws: Leyes de Indias, Vol. I, Libro VIII, Título x, Ley 1; Libro IX, Título i, Ley 56; Vol. II, Libro IV, Título ii, Leyes 1-11.

Notes

1. Medina (I, 36n, 236) says, "Balboa had four brothers younger than himself, almost certainly sons of another mother." But as Medina's own documents show, the record is of no more than three brothers, and, save for Alvar, there is no indication as to whether they were younger or older than Vasco Núñez. One, Gonzalo, had a son old enough to go with Cabot as *gentilhombre* in 1525; and certainly Balboa's career and enlistment for the Indies followed a pattern already usual for younger sons. I believe that in order of age the Balboa brothers were: Gonzalo, Vasco, Juan, Alvar.

2. One can track the Balboa y Valcarcel family through the thickets of genealogy fairly well until the early fifteenth century after which

descendants through the female line—notably, Quirogas, Osorios, and their heirs—eclipsed the numerous male lines. In the time of its greatest glory (roughly, 1290–1414) the brightest stars were: Gutierre Fernández de Balboa, one of the first three Grand Masters of the knightly Order of Alcántara; Garci Rodríguez de Balboa y Valcarcel, Adelantado and Merino Mayor (Governor and Supreme Justice) of Galicia, and his son of the same name, who also ruled Galicia; Fernán Rodríguez de Balboa, Grand Prior of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (Hospitalers) and all-powerful minister of King Alfonso XI; Fray Gonzalo de Balboa (d. 1313), General of the Franciscan Order and Doctor of the University of Paris; Vicente Arias de Balboa (Vasco Núñez' great-uncle), Bishop of Palencia, a scholar and a fighting politician, who first defied and then dominated his sovereign.

The name of Vasco Núñez' father is supplied by Gándara (*Nobiliario*, ca. 1640), but Gándara's data are sometimes more copious than reliable. Cascales (*Discursos históricos*, ca. 1614, cited by García Carraffa, III, 79) says that Nuño Martínez de Balboa was head of the house about 1540, when he lost the castle of Balboa in a lawsuit. (See also, among others: Haro, *Nobiliario*, 1622; Salazar y Mendoza, *Origen de las dignidades*, 1622; Salazar y Castro, *Historia . . . de la casa de Lara*, 1696; Núñez de Castro, *Corona gótica*, 1739; Trelles, *Asturias ilustrada*, 1760.) The chronicles of the kings of Castile and Leon provide some colorful data on the more prominent Balboas.

3. The capricious use of surnames makes it hard to trace blood relationships in any but exalted families. Wives were known by their maiden names, and several legitimate children might bear entirely different surnames. Bastidas' most solidly authenticated relatives, aside from his wife, Isabel Rodríguez (or Ruiz) de Romero, and their son Rodrigo, were two nephews and a niece. These, surprisingly, were all called Bastidas, but since their parents were Alonso Sánchez and Catalina Gutiérrez, it is uncertain to which Bastidas was brother. Sánchez was a "carpenter" (shipwright); he died about 1507 and Catalina married the next year another carpenter named Juan Martínez (FAAP, I, 19–336, *passim*; DAAP, 29–188, *passim*; CPI [1930], 42, 153; DIRD, II, 435).

4. Juan de la Cosa, native of Santona and resident in El Puerto de Santa María, has been identified with another mariner of the same name, also of Santona, who was owner and master of Columbus' flagship on the First Voyage and who died in 1496. The confusion is cleared up by Morison (*Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, I, 187, 198). Our Cosa, who was a much better fellow, had sailed with Columbus on the Second Voyage as

able seaman and cartographer, and with Hojeda as chief pilot in 1499–1500. When Bastidas enlisted him as pilot and partner, he was engaged in drawing his famous *mappemonde*. The map bears the inscription: “Juan de la Cosa made this in Puerto Santa María in the year 1500.” It has provoked endless discussion because it depicts things officially unknown at that time: a continuous coast from Brazil to Labrador, broken only by a drawing of St. Christopher placed strategically over a doubtful section corresponding to the Isthmus of Panama; and Cuba, with reasonable accuracy, as an island. The theory that it was predated or later revised is negated by the fact that, whereas the coasts charted up to 1500 are defined and studded with place names, coasts explored after that year are vague and blank—including those discovered and mapped by Cosa himself in 1501–1502 and 1504–1506. (The fate of these charts, the first to depict Darién, is unknown. See deposition of Juan de Xéres [Ispizúa, *Historia de los vascos*, IV, 76n].) In any case, the potter over an explanation seems unnecessary. No one can say how many bootleg voyages were made to the New World between 1493 and 1500, but they were undoubtedly numerous, and Cosa would have heard a good deal about what they found from his seafaring friends.

5. The text of Bastidas' contract with the Crown is in DIRD, II, 262–66, and Navarrete, *Viages*, II, 244 ff.; that with his twenty backers is in DIHHA, X, App. I.

6. In September, 1501, it was decreed that “any person in receipt of a license to discover by sea must take at least two ships of not more than 60 *toneladas* [burthen].” Each ship could carry no more than thirty men; she had to be provisioned for at least a year and was required to take certain essentials in duplicate: two anchors, two rudders, two pilots, and two priests (Leyes de Indias, Vol. II, Libro IV, Título ii: “Of explorations by sea”). For some notes on what toneles and toneladas meant in reckoning the size of ships (and, rather more definitely, what they did not mean), see Appendix III above.

7. “Martín Boriol, master and owner of the nao *Santa María de Gracia*, and Rodrigo de Bastidas, captain of *Santa María*, declare that they owe to Alfonso Núñez, merchant, 17,500 maravedíes which he lent to them for supplies for the said ship, which has to go to the Indies” (DIHHA, X, 15). On the same day Boriol signed a document in which he assumed sole responsibility for the debt (*ibid.*). After this, other evidence is superfluous, but it is not lacking: For instance, the pilot Antón García testified that he saw Bastidas leave Spain (DIRDU, VII, 220–21), and there is docu-

mentary proof that García was not back from the Vélez de Mendoza voyage to Brazil until February 1501. (Casas' passage on the subject has been misread; actually it supports the 1501 date.) The closed season for sailings to the Indies was from November 11 to March 11, (Leyes [1538], fol. 242); if Bastidas waited it out, he must have left immediately after, for he reached the Goajira Peninsula, just west of the Gulf of Venezuela, by the end of April. The erroneous October 1500 date evidently stems from Bernáldez, who stated that Bastidas returned to Spain in September 1502 after an absence of twenty-three months (*Historia de los Reyes Católicos*, chap. cxevi).

8. Bastidas did not name the river Magdalena "because it was the day on which that saint's conversion is celebrated." In 1501 that day fell on April 1, when Bastidas had not yet reached South America. The Magdalena was known only as the Big River for long after its discovery. It is possible, however, that subsequent bestowal of the name was in reference to its discovery on July 22, which is the saint's day.

9. Bohío del Gato means "House of the Cat," probably in reference to a tethered ocelot. It is now called Bahía del Gato, "Bay of the Cat."

10. The names of the islands have become sadly mixed. Those near Cartagena, christened San Bernardo by Bastidas, are now called Islas de Rosario; the group farther south, known to the Indians and all early geographers as the Islands of Barú (Barú being the mainland province opposite them), have acquired the name of San Bernardo. And, just to make it more difficult, the large, barely detached island which closes Cartagena bay on the south has been invested with the name Barú.

11. Just how far Bastidas and Cosa went along the Isthmian coast is a matter of disagreement. Testimony on the subject taken in connection with the lawsuit brought against the Crown by Columbus' son Diego Colón—the famous "*Pleitos de Colón*"—permits different conclusions (DIRDU, VII, VIII, *passim*). The maximum limit is the port of El Retrete, some 180 miles from Darién. The minimum, or Gulf-of-Urabá-only interpretation, is based on the fact that Bastidas himself claimed no more; always a clamlike witness, he limited himself to terse affirmation in answer to the specific question: Was it true that he and Cosa had been the discoverers of Urabá and Darién? And in 1521, citing his merits, he said merely that he had discovered "a great part of Tierra Firme, and islands, and Darién." But several witnesses were more precise, and I believe their intermediate version to be correct. According to this, Bastidas got about 110 miles beyond Darién, past the Isla de Pinos. It was when Columbus, coming

from the opposite direction in 1503, reached this point that he turned back from his fourth voyage.

12. Bancroft, in the course of a highly inaccurate account of Bastidas' voyage, tosses off the statement that Bastidas, having captured a great number of Indians in Darién, left them to drown on the sinking ships in order to save his gold. I have been unable to find the slightest support for this casual slander.

13. When Bastidas reached Santo Domingo, the acting Governor was Francisco de Bobadilla, Comendador of the Order of Calatrava, who had gone to Hispaniola in 1500 to investigate Columbus' alleged misgovernment and had sent the Admiral in fetters to Spain. His successor, Fray Nicolás de Ovando, Comendador of the Order of Alcántara, arrived in Santo Domingo on April 15, 1502. Bobadilla was drowned on his return voyage to Spain.

14. Neither Columbus' biographer-son Fernando, nor his friend Bernáldez (who has much to tell of the hurricane), nor, for that matter, the Admiral himself, says anything about a prescient warning.

15. Bastidas estimated that his ships, cargo, and treasure had been worth five million maravedies (testimony in his trial [Navarrete, *Viages*, II, 416-20]). He saved three iron chests containing seventy-five pounds of "good" gold and his pearls, plus a quantity of low-carat gold objects and native goods. See Casas, Bk. II, chap. 2; Pietro Rondinelli's letter of October 3, 1502, from Seville (DSCC, Pt. III, Vol. II, pp. 120-21); deposition of Vicente Yáñez Pinzón (DIRDU, VII, 267); cédula of March 1503 (DIHHA, VI, 72); deposition of Bastidas, 1521 (DIRD, II, 336-467).

16. Several responsible citizens having stood surety for Bastidas, the Queen ordered that he should not be dunned by his creditors until his case was decided in Council (MS document in the archives of Santa Marta, Colombia). He was acquitted on December 3, 1503; the executive decree was dated January 29, 1504. On June 22, 1504, he received a grant of privileges, but he may have already left for Hispaniola before it was delivered, for he was in Santo Domingo before Columbus got there in early August of that year, and it was not until 1515 that he asked the pilot Juan de Ledesma to bring from Spain the parchment "sealed with a leaden seal hanging by colored cords."

CHAPTER III

Principal Sources

Bernáldez, chaps. cc-ccix; Leguina, pp. 102-3, 187, 189-225; Puente y Olea, pp. 20-22, 53, 59, 92; DIRD, XXXI, 129-31, 378-80, 401; XXXII, 25-29, 43-54; XXXVI, 206-85, *passim*; XXXIX, 158, 166-67; DIHHA, X, 148-49; Medina, II, 396; Navarrete, *Viajes de . . . Vespucci*, p. 150; Navarrete (*Viages*, Vols. II and III) gives many pertinent documents, but most of his deductions are erroneous.

Cosa's voyage: Oviedo, Bk. III, chap. 8; Bk. XXVII, chaps. 1-3; Varnhagen, *Nouvelles Recherches*, pp. 12-14; DIRD, XXXI, 129-249, *passim*; XXXVI, 291-92; XXXIX, 44; DIHHA, VI, 231-33; X, 23, 28, 38; FAAP, V, 13, 14; Puente y Olea, pp. 21, 24-27; Leguina, pp. 169-88, *passim*; DIRDU, VII, 211, 213, 318-19.

Notes

1. The text of Cosa's contract is in DIRD, XXI, 220-29.
2. The licensing of three expeditions for the same region—a most unusual measure—was probably due to fear of Portuguese poachers. A year or so earlier the worry had been over possible English trespassers; Hojeda's contract for his 1502 expedition had specified that he erect markers to warn off English explorers. This was not, as Navarrete says (*Viages*, III, 41), because "Hojeda on his first voyage [1499] had found certain Englishmen in the immediate vicinity of Coquibacoa [Gulf of Venezuela]" (a statement for which there is no evidence whatever), but because the Spanish ambassadors in England had advised that Henry VII was licensing voyages to the New World. In 1503 it was known that although Henry had granted letters patent to mixed English-Portuguese expeditions to America in 1501 and 1502, their objective was Newfoundland; the immediate preoccupation was now with Portugal, which was reported to have sent one armada to the Caribbean and to be contemplating the sending of another. In August 1503 Cosa went on a confidential mission to Portugal to investigate the reports, which he discovered to be true (Puente y Olea, p. 21).

3. Hojeda's contract, dated September 30, 1504, specified that he leave within six months. On March 10, 1505, he was granted another four

months' leeway; in September the King informed Governor Ovando that Hojeda had already left, bound for Hispaniola (DIRD, XXXI, 258-68; DIHHA, VI, 109-10; Puente y Olea, p. 37).

4. There are two accounts of Cosa's 1504-1506 voyage. The first, dated December 23, 1506, was given to the government of Venice by Jeronimo Vianello, a rich and talented Venetian. Vianello had unusual opportunities for gathering information: He had gone to Castile in his own ship in early 1504, when his splendid and well-chosen presents to the sovereigns (in particular, a jeweled cross "worth more than 600 ducats" to the Queen; two Arab stallions and some hunting falcons to the King) had insured him instant favor. His knowledge of the African coast combined with his unusual gift for tactics made him chief advisor to the King and the Archbishop-Primate Cisneros in the campaigns against the Moors of 1505 and 1509, and their success was attributed to his counsel. Cisneros "held him in great esteem . . . and ordered that whenever . . . Messer Jeronimo Vianello should come, no door should be closed to him." In 1506, when Cosa returned, Cisneros was Regent of Castile and Vianello one of his right-hand men. (Vallejo, *Memorial de la vida . . . de Cisneros* [ca. 1530], pp. 66-67, 73-74, 77-79, 117-18, 120; Zurita, *Historia del rey don Hernando el Cathólico*, Bk. X.) The part of Vianello's report relating to Cosa's voyage is in the *Diarii di Marin Sanuto*, Vol. VI, and DSCC, Pt. III, Vol. II, pp. 185-87; it is given verbatim by Varnhagen, *Nouvelles Recherches*, pp. 12-14. (Humboldt's excerpts and reasonings therefrom are best ignored.) The second account of the expedition is in Oviedo's chronicle, Bk. XXVII, chaps. 1 and 2. The two complement each other: Vianello's is mainly concerned with the first part of the voyage; Oviedo's with the last.

5. The river has been identified with the Atrato—which it certainly was not—chiefly because of what appears to be one of those frequent slips in writing west for east. Vianello said it was two hundred leagues from Hispaniola and six hundred leagues from what is clearly Urabá.

6. Purely at a guess, the island may have been Santa Lucía, noted both for its fierce Carib inhabitants and its many venomous snakes.

7. A marco was eight ounces, half a Spanish pound of 460.06 grams. See Appendix II.

8. Cosa was paid his 50,000-maravedí pension, in December 1506, "out of the 491,708 mrs. which came to His Highness from the quinto on the profit in gold and aljófar obtained in the voyage on which Juan de la Cosa went as captain" (Leguina, p. 188). At this time the King received

only one half the royalties and revenues of the Indies, as bequeathed to him by Queen Isabel. The whole quinto on gold and aljófar was, therefore, 983,416 maravedíes, which according to Cosa's contract was one fifth the total proceeds. The item quoted above has been printed in several forms, sometimes with errors of which the worst is assignment to a date three years previous to the event.

9. Vespucci had a thriving trade with the Indies, from which a fellow Italian said he had made 13,000 ducats. It is not quite clear whether it was general trade, or slave trade in particular.

10. Felipe had some excuse. He had previously been recognized as coheir with Juana, and Castilian law established that "in the marriage of a female successor to the throne, the husband, even if he be of inferior lineage, should share the scepter and the name of sovereign, with the other pre-eminences conceded to the male in all the world."

11. There is frequent reference to these limits in the chronicles, but they are not stated in the contract. Hojeda's jurisdiction as governor appears in numerous cédulas as "from Cabo del Isleo westward to what is called Los Coxos" (DIRD, XXXI, 250-51, 258-68; DIHHA, VI, 3; *et al.*). Isleo means islet, and Cabo de la Vela has an island just off it; however, Cape of the Islet was a name rather freely applied in those times, often to a point not far from Cabo Codera (Carenero) in Venezuela, which Hojeda, in 1499, was the first to discover. Los Coxos (Cojos), the Lame, or Lopsided, Ones, presumably indicated islands off the Isthmian shore; it was specified that, as a boundary, they left the Gulf of Urabá in Hojeda's gobernación.

CHAPTER IV

Principal Sources

Casas, Bk. I, chaps. 82, 102; Bk. II, chaps. 52, 56-59; Bk. III, chap. 31; Oviedo, Bk. XXVII, chap. 3; Bk. XXVIII, chap. 1; Martyr, Dec. I, Bks. 1, 2; Colmenares' memorials (Muñoz Transcripts, N.Y., Rich 3); DIRD, XXXIX, 499-509; Medina, II, 145-52; Altolaguirre, App. 60; Velásquez report, 1512-1513 (Sagra, *Historia . . . de Cuba*, Vol. II, App. I); DIRD, XI, 418-21, 425-26; XXII, 13-26; XXXI, 378-80, 401, 529-35, 547-51; XXXII, 29-45; XXXVI, 226, 245, 274, 284-85, 288-90; DIRDU, VII, 205, 209, 416; DIHHA, VI, 232, 283, 309, 335-41, 371-80; X, 146, 148-49, 151, 157, 163, 166-67; XIV, 7-11;

Autógrafos de Colón, pp. 48–52, 88; Medina, II, 2–7, 9–13; Puente y Olea, pp. 89, 93, 94; Leguina, p. 191; Leyes de Indias, Vol. II, Libro IV, Título iv; Libro VI, Títulos viii, x.

Notes

1. The contract is in DIRD, XXII, 29–43, and Medina, II, 2–7. According to Castilian law, all mines were the property of the Crown. In the first years of New World colonization the sovereigns conceded one half; a little later they reduced their interest to one third. In 1504 the royalty rate of one fifth was established on mines in the Indies (Solórzano, *Política Indiana*, Bk. VI, chap. 1).

2. Colón's ideas were regal rather than viceregal. Bearing in mind that his pretensions applied to all New World lands including those not yet discovered, it is interesting to consider some of his specific demands: exemption from any investigation or review of his government; complete freedom of civil and judicial appointments; legal jurisdiction, also including cases before the Casa de Contratación; ownership of one third of the land. On the financial side he claimed one tenth of all revenues including court fines, customs, church tithes, and the profits from Crown estates; one third of the profits from expeditions, to be calculated on the gross before deduction of royalties; one eighth of profits from trade, plus salaries (plural) as governor, as viceroy, and as admiral. (No wonder his father's will was based on an estimate of a minimum initial income of 8,750,000 maravedíes a year!) He did not, of course, get anything like this; however, after a few years in office, despite heavy expenditure and the building of an impressive palace, he was able to purchase a fief in Spain for 11,800,000 maravedíes, of which 10,000,000 had been paid when—in violation of a contractual obligation—he resold it soon after; and in 1520 he was in a position to help his cause by lending Charles V 10,000 ducats (Gestoso y Pérez, *Nuevos documentos colombinos*, pp. 29–31; Schoenrich, *The Legacy of Christopher Columbus*, I, 26–122). The legal battles of Columbus' heirs, with the Crown and among themselves, lasted the better part of three centuries.

3. Hojeda is usually presented in connection with this voyage as an unscrupulous, greedy adventurer with a shaky title to the enterprise. The origin of the picture is in Columbus' resentment, mirrored by Casas, and most of its features are surprisingly easy to disprove. Hojeda's contract was signed by Fonseca because the King was absent from Castile, but it could never have been given without royal consent. Far from trying to

get as much in gold and pearls as possible, Hojeda limited himself to a few "samples," and refused to pause in his rapid course to get more. His voyage was expensive and profitless, yet he was warmly commended and handsomely rewarded for his services to the Crown. Incidentally, it seems perfectly established that Amerigo Vespucci went with Hojeda from Spain—see the depositions of Hojeda (DIRDU, VII, 205; DIRD, XXXIX, 331) and Casas' chronicle (Bk. I, chap. 139) as well as Vespucci's writings. But, on evidence too long and involved to discuss here, it would seem that when Hojeda and Cosa made for Hispaniola after the hasty check of Columbus' mainland discoveries, Vespucci parted company with them.

4. King Fernando to Diego Colón, March 10, 1510 (DIHHA, VI, 231–33).

5. The Hojedas came from old Castile, but Alonso was born in Cuenca, apparently about 1470. Either Alonso was a favorite family name, or elder Hojedas tended to christen their children in honor of the famous Inquisitor, Alonso de Hojeda, our man's second cousin: another Alonso, also of Cuenca, who created an unpleasant stir in the Indies about 1520, has been confused with the Governor of Urabá, and yet another was a well-known merchant trading with the Indies. Our Alonso had been page and squire to Don Luis de la Cerda, Duke of Medinaceli, one of the richest and noblest grandees of Spain, whose principal residence was the castle of San Marco in El Puerto de Santa María. The Duke had been host to Columbus for two years, and had planned to back an expedition in search of the westward passage, even building ships for it in his own yards. Perhaps this explains why, despite youth and inexperience, Hojeda made his first voyage to the Indies in 1493 as captain of one of the Admiral's ships. As an Indian fighter for Columbus, he was admired for his reckless bravery even by his victims: The great chief, Caonabo, whom he had captured by a rather shady trick and whom Columbus kept chained in his house, refused to notice any other Spaniard, but when little Hojeda came by he got to his feet and bowed.

6. Nicuesa had been official carver to the King's uncle, a post of some social importance. He came to Hispaniola with Ovando in 1502. By skillful combination of concessions and *repartimientos* granted partly in consideration of his financial backing, and financial backing given him in view of his concessions and *repartimientos*, he soon amassed a large fortune. His trip to Castile in 1508 had been made as a *procurador* (agent) of the colony, charged chiefly with persuading the King to sanction a more generous interpretation of *repartimientos*.

7. Martyr, Dec. I, Bk. 2. Casas, writing forty years later, puts the date in November, which from other evidence would have been impossible. A memorial by Colmenares written in 1516 confirms the later date (Medina, II, 146).

8. The date usually given for Cosa's death is February 28, 1510, because King Fernando ordered that Cosa's widow be paid the pilot's salary "from January 1, 1510, to the last day of February of that year" (Leguina, p. 191). This, however, may well have been a bonus (Cosa had collected all his salary for 1509 before leaving Spain). From all other chronological indications the February 1510 date is more than two months late.

9. Talavera's theft, not mentioned in dispatches from Hispaniola of March 1510, was first reported in letters of June 10-12 (DIHHA, VI, 335-41; Medina, II, 15-16).

10. Report of Diego Velázquez, April 1, 1514, printed from a Muñoz Transcript by Ramón de la Sagra in *Historia física, política y natural de la isla de Cuba*, II, App. 1; Casas, Bk. III, chap. 31. Mejía said that San Sebastián had been abandoned seven months after it was founded.

CHAPTER V

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXVII, chap. 4; Bk. XXIX, chaps. 2, 6; Martyr, Dec. II, Bk. 2; Casas, Bk. II, chaps. 62-64; Colmenares' memorials (see sources of Chapter IV); Enciso, *Suma de geografía*, and memorials (Muñoz Transcripts, N.Y., Vol. 128); Medina, II, 9, 44-46; Altolaguirre, Apps. 11, 12; DIRD, XXXI, 229-33.

Location of Darién: Enciso, *Suma de geografía*; Andagoya, *Relación*; Oviedo, Bk. III, chap. 8; Bk. IX, chap. 11; Bk. XXI, chaps. 6, 7; Bk. XXVII, chaps. 1, 12; Bk. XXVIII, chaps. 3, 30; Bk. L, chap. 3; *Sumario*, chap. lxxviii; Martyr, Dec. II, Bk. 9; Dec. III, Bk. 6; *Opus epistolarum*, Letter 542; Chaves, *Qvatri partitv*, chap. viii, ix; Laet, Bk. VIII, chaps. 1, 8; references in contemporary letters and reports.

Notes

1. Oviedo (Bk. XXVII, chap. 4) says that Balboa made his getaway hidden in the lateen sail on the mizzen yard. The difficulty of boarding a guarded ship and then getting unobserved into a furled sail would seem

to rule out this version—not to mention what would have happened when canvas was set at sailing time.

2. Leoncico was no beauty. He was built for use: a stocky, husky, yellow-brown fellow, covered with the scars of battle. But he was said to have had more than human intelligence—he could distinguish at once between a “good” Indian and an enemy one, and adapted his methods accordingly, occasionally offering an obvious rebuke to some conscienceless conquistador. He was undoubtedly paid well as a mercenary; however, one may question whether Oviedo really saw him earn more than five hundred pesos of gold in eight months (Bk. XVI, chap. 11).

3. The fact that the Tanela now turns to lose itself in the channels of the Atrato Delta is immaterial. Fairly modern surveys show it entering the sea directly, and in the map drawn in 1526 by Juan Vespucci, who had been there, it has an estuary. In Roger Barlowe’s translation of Enciso’s *Suma de geografia*, which has a flavor the original lacks, the passage about the situation of “the Darien” reads as follows: “And on the west parte v leges within the gulf is the Darien w^{ch} is inhabited with cristen people, and here thei gather fyne golde in certeine ryvers that descende from the hie mountaynes.”

4. Cédulas of February 28, 1510 (DIRD, XXXI, 229–33; Medina, II, 9).

CHAPTER VI

Principal Sources

Casas, Bk. II, chaps. 65, 66; Martyr, Dec. II, Bks. 2, 3, 10; Oviedo, Bk. XXVII, chap. 3; Bk. XXVIII, chaps. 1, 3; Medina, II, 11, 12, 16; DIRD, XXXIX (Pleitos de Colón), *passim*.

Notes

1. If Nicuesa was relying on a copy of Bartolomé’s chart as we know it, he had some excuse. For one thing, he would have been waiting for the coast to turn sharp north before reaching Veragua. He was not the only person to have trouble finding the place. A colonizing armada sent by Diego Colón’s widow in 1536 first overshot it by nearly seven hundred miles in one direction, and then, returning, went ninety miles past it in the other.

2. Martyr, Dec. II, Bk. 10; Dec. III, Bk. 4. He is the only source for the exact location, but he is extremely precise and equally positive. He had from Columbus information about the coast which is not found in other accounts of the Fourth Voyage, and he had been allowed to study charts in the Casa de Contratación which, unavailable to most people, were elucidated for him by Bishop Fonseca. Oviedo, so far as can be gathered, thought the island was Uvita, just off Puerto Limón (Bk. XXI, chap. 7; Bk. XXVIII, chaps. 2 and 4). He says that Nicuesa named the island Escudo, but he does not, like some later writers, confuse it with the obviously impossible Escudo de Veragua.

3. Columbus had apparently missed the harbor. His Puerto de Bastimentos, sometimes identified with Nombre de Dios, was an anchorage in the shelter of the (then) richly tilled islands west of Punta Manzanilla.

4. Nicuesa's report is not extant, but fortunately its contents are summarized in the King's reply of July 25, 1511 (Medina, II, 16). Since it is evident that neither the report, nor Ledesma and his companions, had anything to say about a new settlement, they must have left Belén before Nicuesa did—but not, in view of the fact that the fort in Nombre de Dios was completed in December, very long before. Incidentally, Oviedo's chronology of Nicuesa's adventures is wildly unreliable.

CHAPTER VII

Principal Sources

Casas, Bk. II, chaps. 64, 67, 68; Bk. III, chap. 39; Oviedo, Bk. XXVIII, chap. 3; Bk. XXIX, chap. 2; Martyr, Dec. II, Bk. 3; Medina, II, 44–46; Altolaguirre, Apps. 7, 12; DIHHA, VI, 335–41, 395–98; DIRD, XXXII, 284–88.

Notes

1. The document was preserved in the archives of Santa María, where Oviedo read it in 1514.

2. According to Casas, Nicuesa was forced to swear that he would go “without pause” to Spain to present himself to the King—which certainly would indicate that the colonists were very sure of themselves.

3. As judge, according to Martyr, as chief constable according to Casas. Colmenares, in 1516, out to ruin Balboa, claimed that Balboa “took

a nao which Rodrigo de Colmenares had brought and therein put the bachiller Enciso a prisoner, and sent him to Española Island." Enciso himself indicated that his imprisonment was over when he left, and said that he paid 50 pesos to "the ship which took me"—a sum which indicates joint charter rather than passenger fares; Enciso calculated full charter of a ship from Hispaniola to Darién at 100 pesos (Altolaguirre, App. 7).

CHAPTER VIII

Principal Sources

Martyr, Dec. II, Bks. 3, 4, 6; Casas, Bk. II, chaps. 42, 60, 61; Bk. III, chaps. 5, 19, 24, 29, 36, 37, 39, 42; Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chaps. 1, 2; Bk. XXXVIII, chap. 3; DIRDU, VII, 59; XX, 228–29; DIHHA, VI, 271–424, *passim*; Medina, II, 14–27, 46; Altolaguirre, xxiii, xxix–xxxi, notes; Apps. 2–7; DIRD, V, 297; VI, 371; XXXII, 284–88, 356.

Notes

1. Enciso and his companions fetched Cuba on Easter Sunday (April twentieth). They had not yet arrived in Santo Domingo on May seventeenth, when dispatches were sent to Castile.

2. The date of Hojeda's arrival is not known, but it was after February 19, 1511, when the officials of Hispaniola wrote that nothing had been heard of him. His own report to the King was dated from Santo Domingo on May fifth.

3. Cédula of June 15, 1510 (Medina, II, 11–12).

4. The burthen of the letters and reports, which are not extant, can be gathered from the King's replies (Medina, II, 14–19, 26–27; Altolaguirre, pp. xxi–xxiv, and note).

5. Cédula of October 6, 1511 (DIRD, XXXII, 284–88; Medina, II, 20–21; Altolaguirre, pp. xxvii–xxviii).

6. This cryptic phrase is the abbreviation of a conventional formula which may be very freely translated as "the above must be scrupulously honored, or else . . ."

CHAPTER IX

Principal Sources

Martyr, Dec. II, Bks. 3, 4; Oviedo, Bk. XXVIII, chap. 3; Bk. XXIX, chap. 3; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 39–42; Balboa's report of January 20, 1513 (Medina, II, 129–39; Altolaguirre, App. 8); Altolaguirre, Apps. 2–6.

Geography: Enciso, *Suma de geografía*; Andagoya, *Relación*; Oviedo, Bk. XXI, chap. 7; Bk. XXIX, chap. 28; DIRD, II, 538; Laet, Bk. VIII, chaps. 1, 9, 10; Cuervo, II, 275–77. See also the trans-Isthmian routes described by the buccaneers (Wafer, Esquemeling, Ringrose, Dampier) and the narratives of the Scots who attempted to found New Caledonia in the late seventeenth century.

Notes

1. There are two harbors in this bit of coast (not counting New Caledonia, made famous by the Scots' abortive effort to gain a foothold in the Isthmus in the late seventeenth century). One is between Isla Gorda and the mainland, and can be entered only from the south. The other, only a few miles north, is easier to get into, but less sheltered. Either may have been that which the colonists christened Port of Careta, but on the evidence of the distances given, Isla Gorda has a slight edge on Sasardí.

2. Relay of the adverse version of events in Careta is clear: Colmenares to Martyr to Casas.

3. Morison (*Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, II, 334, 345) says that Columbus, at Chiriquí Lagoon, "definitely learned that he was on an isthmus," and adds that "strangely enough, the proof that he was on an isthmus seems to have ended Columbus' search for a strait." But—aside from the question of whether it is really strange to cease looking for a strait when convinced one is on an isthmus—Columbus refused to admit he was on anything but a peninsula. He quoted the Indians as saying that the sea went around it, and likened it to the Italian and Iberian peninsulas ("Lettera Rarissima," DSCC, Pt. I, Vol. II, pp. 197–98). When he finally gave up, about eighty to a hundred miles from Darién, by his geography he could have expected any hour to see the triumphant vindication of all his dreams: the sea passage beyond which it was straight sailing to the

Ganges. His armada was in very bad shape, but it is significant that he turned back at about the point reached in 1502 by Bastidas and Cosa, of whose course he was informed. Superb navigator that he was, he must have recognized *then* what he would not concede: that he was indeed on an isthmus, with no strait to be found.

CHAPTER X

Principal Sources

All the chroniclers give information about the Indians, applicable in part to the Isthmus. The most extensive data on the natives the Darién colonists knew are in Oviedo, particularly in Books V–XVI, XXIX, LXIII, and in the *Sumario*, and in Andagoya's *Relación*. For the Cenú, see Enciso, *Suma de geografía*, and Simón, 1^a Noticia, chap. xxi. The transfer of the Indians from the east side of the Gulf to Urabá prior to 1535 appears in the documents cited by Matilla Tascón, *Viajes de Julián Gutiérrez*, and is confirmed by Cieza de León in the first part of his *Crónica del Perú*. The Indians described by participants in the abortive Scotch colony near Careta (late seventeenth century) and by the English buccaneers were post-Darién Cunas. Modern ethnological studies are too numerous to cite here, and their direct application appears dubious.

Notes

1. Bishop Quevedo of Darién to King Fernando; Licenciado Zuazo to M. de Chièvres, and to the Cardinal-Regent Cisneros (DIRD, I, 306–32; DIHE, II, 347–75).

2. As for the lands they occupied, they were, according to Oviedo, the true Hesperides. The chronicler indignantly denied that the Indies were ever visited by the Romans—a theory which arose from the alleged finding of a Roman coin in Darién—but he was equally positive that they had been discovered by Héspero, eleventh king of Spain, thirty centuries before Columbus sighted Guanahani.

3. In Catío, *ura-bá*, or *urra-bá*, means “place of the eagle.” The lagoon near the conquistadores’ landing place, and the hill just above it, still bear the same name in Spanish: Ciénaga, or Cerro, del Aguila.

4. Cenú was more properly called Finzenú, and was one of three

affiliated "provinces." The other two, Panzenú and Zenúfame, to the south, were fantastically rich in gold, but Finzenú had a special cachet, perhaps because it was the original Catío home. The illustrious dead of Panzenú and Zenúfame were taken to Finzenú for burial together with their dearest wives, their best slaves, and the greater part of their treasure; in Finzenú, too, stood the Catío shrine: an immense structure in which twenty-four paired statues, presided over by a twenty-fifth, sat in state covered with massy golden ornaments. In 1534 a marauding expedition from Cartagena rifled the shrine, some of the tombs, and the memorial trees decked with golden fruit, and got between 3000 and 4000 pounds of gold (Simón, 1^a Noticia, chap. xxi).

5. Bea, in Catío, means "sown field," specifically, a cornfield, from *be* (maize). The word Oviedo gives as used in Bea and Çorobarí for "eat," is also Catío. The names of two rivers in the region, Cutí and Cuití, are frequently cited as proof of Cuna occupation, since, in Cuna, Cuití means River of Sand Flies, and Cutí, River of Lice. The evidence is not conclusive. *Tí* is pure Cuna, but *cui*, in Catío, means "to bathe," and one meaning of *cu* is a sharp angle or bend—both good source words for the river names, if we admit a mingled Cuna-Carib population. Certainly something like Big Bend River sounds more reasonable than Lice River. Incidentally, by the principle whereby a prehistoric animal is reconstructed from a single vertebra, one may wonder if Careta were not an early Cuna enclave in the eastern Isthmus. Andogoya says that the site chosen for the settlement established there was called Acla, which means "bones of men." *Ar-kala*, in Cuna, means "ribs."

With regard to the language of Cueva, it is frequently impossible to be sure whether the Indian words noted by the colonists were true Cuevan or not. Here, in the spelling of the chronicles, are a few more of those explicitly labeled as Cuevan:

chuy	man
yra	woman
chucra (chucbe)	neophyte or greenhorn
eracra	house
ochi	jaguar
beori	tapir
chuche	peccary
churche	opossum
coygaraca	plant (medicinal)

perorica	.....	plant (kind of mint)
yayagua	.....	} varieties of pineapple
yayama	.....
boniamo	.....
toreba	.....	large olla
haboga	.....	fish
camayoa	.....	homosexual
canica	.....	excrement

Most of the words given by Martyr are Cuna, proper to the Río León and the lower Atrato, and were picked up from Colmenares. It should be noted that Martyr, at this time, usually employed the terms Urabá and Darién as synonymous: i.e., the gobernación and its capital.

6. See Paul Bergsøe's studies of pre-Columbian techniques in gold working (cited in the Bibliography). His findings are based on the gold wrought by Indians of northern Ecuador, but from Oviedo's remarks on gilded objects in the Isthmus, it would seem that the process there was the same, including the all-important acid herbal bath which was the final step.

CHAPTER XI

Principal Sources

Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 42-44, 117; Martyr, Dec. II, Bks. 3, 4, 6; Dec. III, Bk. 6; Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chap. 2; Balboa's report of January 20, 1513 (Altolaguirre, App. 8; Medina, II, 129-39); Balboa's letter of October 16, 1515 (Altolaguirre, App. 44 [misdated October 26]; DIRD, III, 526-38); Herrera, Dec. II, Bk. IV, chaps. 6-8; Cortés, *Cartas*, pp. 1-11; Bernal Díaz, chaps. 3, 27, 29; Medina, II, 36, 37, 319-23.

Geography: Balboa's report and letter cited above; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 61, 62; Oviedo, Bk. IV, chap. 41; Bk. XXVII, chaps. 4, 10; Colmenares' memorials (see sources of Chapter IV); Laet, Bk. VIII, chap. 8.

Notes

1. Valdivia did not leave in the same ship which had brought him from Hispaniola, as Martyr, copied by Casas, says. He went in one of the bergantines. The ship lent to Valdivia by Colón was that of Alonso Pérez Roldán, which returned safely to Santo Domingo about November of the

same year (deposition of Juan Grande, July 1512 [DIRDU, VII, 135]; cédula of July 4, 1513 [Medina, II, 36-37]; report of Balboa, January 20, 1513 [Altolaguirre, App. 8; Medina, II, 129-39]).

2. Martyr says that the island was inhabited by fishermen, and that on it there were sixty villages of ten houses each. This is a lot of fishermen. Balboa's report does not mention so much as a stray hamlet on the island, much less an urban development.

3. The present village, called Dabeiba, is well up in the hills. The original one appears to have been about where Pavorandó is now.

4. Colmenares, for reasons readily appreciable, gave Martyr to understand that he had been up river with Balboa while these events occurred. Casas, however, who copies most of Martyr's account without question, contradicts him here: he says that Colmenares had been left in charge of the camp and was responsible for the ill-advised raids (Bk. III, chap. 43).

CHAPTER XII

Principal Sources

Martyr, Dec. II, Bks. 5, 6, 7; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 43-46; Oviedo, Bk. XXVIII, chap. 3; *Sumario*, chap. xxvi; Balboa's report of January 20, 1513 (Altolaguirre, App. 8; Medina, II, 129-39); Colmenares' memorials (see sources for Chapter IV); Medina, II, 36, 38, 319-28; DIHHA, VI, 162; DIRD, XXXIX, 13-14; Altolaguirre, Apps. 20, 21.

Notes

1. The date of the abortive Indian rebellion is not stated, but it can be fixed within a week or so. The last contingent from the Atrato had already returned to Santa María, seven months after their expedition started; preparation for sending Quicedo and Colmenares to Spain had not begun, and these emissaries left on October 28, 1512.

2. Ocampo was not able to circumnavigate Cuba in 1508. On April 15, 1509, Ovando advised King Fernando that the project had not been completed for lack of caravels (cédula of August 14, 1509 [DIHHA, VI, 162]).

3. Balboa, in his report of January 20, 1513, says, ". . . we have lost, of the three hundred men what we numbered . . ." and then, himself lost in subordinate clauses, forgets to say how many.

CHAPTER XIII

Principal Sources

Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 28, 46, 47; Martyr, Dec. III, Bk. 1; *Opus epistolarum*, Letter 537; Oviedo, Bk. XXVIII, chap. 3; FAAP, V, 99–100; DIRD, III, 36; XXXIV, 121; XXXIX, 332; Altolaguirre, Apps. 2, 8, 20, 21; Medina, II, 58, 59, 335, 413; Navarrete, *Viages*, III, 538–91, *passim*; Sagra, *Historia . . . de Cuba*, Vol. II, App. I; Tapia y Rivera, p. 233.

Notes

1. Quiroga had intended to sail with Nicuesa, and to that end had started from Court in Valladolid on, or just after, September 1, 1509. He missed the boat. On February 23 of the next year his servant was given clearance to accompany him (CPI [1930]), but when they left is uncertain. He does not seem to have gone to Tierra Firme before the ill-fated voyage of 1513 (cédula of September 1, 1509 [Tapia y Rivera, p. 233]).

2. If the statement is exact that *Chapinera* arrived "while Vasco Núñez was alcalde mayor"—that is, before he received his brevet—Serrano cannot have been in Darién before the middle of 1513. *Chapinera* left Spain in December of 1512 (DIRD, III, 36; XXXIV, 121).

3. The small ship appears to have been *Chapinera*. She is not said to have been wrecked, yet her master remained in Darién, and so did the proceeds from the sale of her cargo, deposited with the treasurer of the colony (Medina, II, 413).

4. Oviedo—at least as printed—says that Balboa left with eight hundred *gente*. This must be a slip. *Gente* means either "people" or "troops," but it was never applied to Indians.

CHAPTER XIV

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chap. 3; Martyr, Dec. III, Bks. 1, 10; *Opus epistolarum*, Letter 537; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 47, 48; *Fuero Real*, Libro II, Título ix, Ley 2.

Geography: See sources for Chapter IX above; Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chap. 1; Cuervo, Vol. II. The nineteenth-century surveys made with an eye to construction of an interocean canal contain much information on the eastern Isthmus.

Notes

1. Every expeditionary was a soldier: Reyes the pilot, Núñez the *ex-alcalde* of Nombre de Dios, Valdarrábano the notary, Maestre Alonso the surgeon, Escobar the tailor, León the silversmith, Martín the carpenter. The names of seventy-six of Balboa's companions are attested: they were written in witness to documents drawn at the Pacific. Nine others appear in declarations made in after years by men citing their services in the colony, and one more is vouched for only by Casas. Since this makes eighty-six and since Balboa—who was careful about figures—later said he had eighty, some of the *vecinos* who claimed the expedition as one of their merits must have been among the twelve who turned back to Careta after a few days.

2. Sixty-six, according to the writ made in the hour of discovery (Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chap. 3).

CHAPTER XV

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chaps. 2, 4; Martyr, Dec. III, Bks. 1–3; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 48–51; Father Sánchez' deposition (Medina, II, 319–23); Bishop Quevedo's memorial of January 1515 (Medina, II, 434–41; Altola-guirre, App. 53).

Notes

1. Casas says that there were three scouting parties of twelve men each, their leaders being Francisco Pizarro, Juan de Escaray, and Alonso Martín de Don Benito; and that after two days Alonso Martín, one of whose companions was Blas de Atienza, came first to the ocean. But Casas is in error in supposing that this preceded the act of possession. The scouts were not sent out until after the men left in Quareca had come in, since Martín, Atienza, and Escaray were not with Balboa at the peak. Presumably they started on their reconnaissance the same day that Balboa took possession at the Gulf, for only twenty-six men were left to witness the

ceremony. Incidentally, one of the witnesses was Pizarro, which would indicate that Casas is wrong in assigning him to one of the exploring groups.

2. Martyr says that the Indians of Quareca had told Balboa of black and savage people in a village at one day's march from theirs. The reference may have been to Pacra. The Indians' use of the word "black" to signify "evil"—they even applied it to Spaniards—is at the root of the persistent myth that there were Negroes in southwestern Panama and northwestern Chocó in pre-Columbian times.

3. It was also a thirsty one. The tropical jungle may be wet, but away from the rivers it can be as unproductive of a drink as the Sahara.

4. Father Sánchez, in a combined claim for salary, declaration of merits, and attack on Balboa made in 1514 (Medina, II, 219–23) alleged that at Bucheribuca, when he and six ailing compañeros were cut off from the rest of the expedition by a sudden rise in the river, Balboa heartlessly went on without them, leaving them to follow as best they might. Oviedo, no friend to Balboa, presents a different picture of him: "He had another quality, especially in the field: that if in any march on which he was a man became tired or ill, he did not forsake him; on the contrary, if needful he went with a crossbow to look for a bird or fowl, and killed it and brought it and cooked it for him, as if for a son or brother, and heartened and encouraged him. In which thing no captain of all that have come to these Indies up to now, when we are in 1548, in the expeditions and conquests in which they have been, has done better or even as well as Vasco Núñez" (Bk. XXIX, chap. 2).

5. There is no reliable information about the proceeds from the expedition. Oviedo says Balboa brought back 2000 pesos of gold—possibly an error for 20,000. Casas, typically, says thirty or forty thousand pesos; Gómara boosts it to a hundred thousand. Martyr gives figures for the tribute from twelve chiefs, but Martyr was capable of extraordinary idiosyncrasies in reckoning weights and gold. In this case, although he counts in pounds and pesos, he remarks that a peso was worth a bit over thirty ducats (that is, *his* peso was, for the moment, equal to twenty-five official pesos) and that a pound—his pound—weighed eight ounces. On this basis the partial proceeds he reports come to 54,801 authentic pesos. Perhaps the best indication is an entry in the books of the Casa de Contratación: the receipt of 5337 pesos and 4 tomines of wrought gold in 1514. Only three entries of guanines appear between 1507 and 1517: Zamudio's in 1511 (1277 pesos, 5 tomines, 10 granos); a small quantity in 1513, pos-

sibly corresponding to a present taken by Quicedo and Colmenares; and the 1514 receipt cited above, which jibes with the date on which the quinto on Balboa's entrada is known to have been delivered. If it was the royalty payment, on which the rate had been reduced to a fifth, the gross proceeds in gold were 26,687½ pesos. Martyr also says that Balboa got two hundred choice pearls from Tumaca, two hundred and forty from Thevaca—of inferior luster owing to the local habit of cooking the oysters before opening them—and a quantity of low-grade ones of small value.

6. One of Casas' numerous inserts in the manuscript of his history after it was finished in 1562 states (Bk. III, chap. 42) that Balboa wrote to Diego Colón that he had hanged thirty chiefs and would be obliged to do the same with all he could capture, because the colonists were few. By implication this was in the letters sent by Valdivia—which, lost at sea, were never read. It was obviously untrue, and seems to be a curious inversion of the many statements that Balboa had made friends of thirty chiefs.

CHAPTER XVI

Principal Sources

Martyr, Dec. II, Bks. 6, 7; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 6, 45, 52; Colmenares' memorials (see sources of Chapter IV); DIHHA, VI, 433–35, 452; X, 228, 231, 235–37, 429, 437, 445–47; XIV, 16, 17; Altolaguirre, Apps. 7, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17; Medina, II, 26–60, *passim*, 104–5; Serrano y Sanz, pp. cccxii–cccxvii, cccxxii; DIRD, XXXII, 452; FAAP, IV, 73.

Notes

1. It is impossible to be sure whether, as is generally supposed, the two ships which arrived in Darién before Balboa's return were those of Arbolancha. Arbolancha certainly started from Spain with two—*San Miguel* and *Buen Jesús*—but they were carrying cargo for Puerto Rico and Hispaniola as well as for Darién, and there is reason to believe that one of them was left in Santo Domingo. In a claim made many years later in connection with the voyage, he said he took "a ship" to Darién (DIHHA, X, 231, 235–37; XIV, 16, 17; Medina, II, 97, 104–5).

2. On September 7, 1512, he signed the customary pledge to the Casa de Contratación, to deliver the freight entrusted to him (DIHHA, X, 236). On September seventeenth, a Sevillian lawyer gave him a power of attorney to sell a slave (FAAP, IV, 73). The documents referred to in this

and the previous note effectively dispose of the theory that Arbolancha left Spain soon after June eleventh (Medina, Altolaguirre) and of the notion that he was one of Balboa's expeditionaries (Martyr, Casas).

3. Serrano y Sanz places the effort to get Aguila as governor in 1513, after the reports brought by the procuradores of Darién were delivered to the King on May twenty-third. But apart from the fact that Pedrarias was named governor within three weeks of the receipt of the reports, Herrera (source of the information about Aguila) is precise: "The Comendador Diego del Aguila was chosen, and the King, being in Logroño, sent to summon him." Fernando was in Logroño from August till just after mid-December 1512.

4. On May thirty-first Fernando wrote the officials of the Casa that when Colmenares and Quicedo turned up in Seville, they should be sent to Court in Valladolid (Altolaguirre, App. 25).

5. On April 21, 1513, Fernando sent a letter to the officials of the Casa, telling them to send a special envoy to protest in his name to the King of Portugal; he enclosed a cédula to Colón, instructing him to send an armada to protect Tierra Firme against Portuguese invasion (Puente y Olea, p. 119).

6. Oviedo, for undisclosed reasons an almost fanatical partisan of Nicuesa, states that the procurador Zamudio fled into hiding in 1512 because of Enciso's charges concerning the ouster of Nicuesa. This is wishful thinking. Martyr mentions talking with Zamudio at Court (Dec. II, Bk. 3), but says nothing about his being in disfavor. In 1516 Zamudio stated that, having successfully negotiated the petitions of the colonists, he handed over the business to Quicedo and Colmenares when they arrived at Court in June of 1513, after more than twenty-six months as representative of the colony (Medina, II, 77). Casas criticizes Enciso severely for having restricted his complaints to matters concerning his personal interests.

7. Cédula of June 18, 1513 (Altolaguirre, App. 11; Medina, II, 36).

8. Casas (Bk. III, chap. 52) has another expedition in these months: Bartolomé Hurtado with forty men to "Benamachei and Abrrayba." According to Casas, Hurtado ". . . did not leave a man alive of those he came upon in his first frenzy; he captured and enslaved everyone he could seize alive, and they stole all the gold and other useful or precious things in the whole land. When they could no longer find anyone, either peaceful or hostile, they all came back very victorious to Darién, with great strings of captive men and women." This brisk résumé seems to have no

basis in fact. It may have been born of confused recollections of stories about the expedition to the Atrato in 1512, and of the attempted offensive of the Indians which followed.

CHAPTER XVII

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chaps. 1, 6; Martyr, Dec. II, Bk. 7; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 53, 59; Herrera, Dec. I, Bk. X, chap. 17; Colmenares' memorials (see sources of Chapter IV); Altolaguirre, Apps. 9-17; Medina, II, 39-76, *passim*; DIHHA, X, 228, 245-49, *passim*; XIV, 31-32, 41, 50, 53; Alvarez, chap. ii and App. 5; Serrano y Sanz, pp. cclxiv-cclxix, ccxcvi-cccxii; Apps. 4, 10, 11, 14; Thobar, *Compendio de las bulas*, chap. 3. The most authoritative study of the organization of the new government and of the armada is that of Serrano y Sanz, "Preliminares del gobierno de Pedrarias Dávila en Castilla del Oro," *Orígenes de la dominación española en América*, pp. cclix-cccxxxviii and appendices.

Notes

1. Casas, who began to write his history at seventy-eight, planned other major works as he reached ninety; Belalcázar was a rampant conquistador at seventy; Carbajal, at eighty-four, scoured Peru with a demon energy that drove his exhausted men to near rebellion; it took an apoplectic stroke to stop Antonio de Lebrija from lecturing to crowded classes at the age of seventy-eight. Pedrarias' aunt-in-law, the Marquesa de Moya, was past sixty when she led a mounted assault on a castle which had been filched from her, retaking it by force of arms. Serrano, chief pilot of Pedrarias' armada, went with Magellan when he was sixty-five. One of the veterans of Darién who was in Lima in 1552 deposed that he was "a hundred years old, more or less."

2. Thobar, *Compendio de las bulas*, chap. 3.

CHAPTER XVIII

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXVI, chap. 10; Bk. XXIX, chaps. 1, 6, 7; Martyr, Dec. II, Bk. 7; Dec. III, Bk. 5; Dec. VII, Bk. 4; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 3-18,

54–57; Andagoya, *Relación*; Colmenares' memorials (see sources for Chapter IV); FAAP, IV, 76–80; DIHHA, VI, 429, 437; X, App. 16 and 228–49, *passim*; XIV, 13–45, *passim*; Puente y Olea, pp. 128–29, 132, 136, 137, 139–41, 393; Medina, II, 31–59, *passim*; 419, 422; Altolaguirre, Apps. 9, 11; Serrano y Sanz, pp. cclxxvi–ccxcvi, cccxvii–cccxxxviii, Apps. 5–9, 12, 13, 15, 16; Alvarez, App. 5; Navarrete, I, cxxx.

Requirement (versions differ slightly): Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chap. 7; Medina, II, 287–89; Casas, Bk. III, chap. 57; Herrera, Dec. I, Bk. VII, chap. 14; Serrano y Sanz ("true text"), pp. ccxcii–ccxciv.

Ships and personnel of the armada: FAAP, Vols. IV, V; DAAP; DIHHA, Vols. X, XIV; CPI (1930 and 1940).

Notes

1. The instructions to Pedrarias are worth reading in full. The text is in Serrano y Sanz, pp. cclxxix–cclxxxviii.

2. The translation is from the text as published by Serrano y Sanz (pp. ccxcii–ccxciv). Compare with other versions (see Principal Sources above). The statement that Hojeda was the first to use the Requirement (at Cartagena in 1509) is an error.

3. In 1511, at Hojeda's request, arms had been dispatched to Hispaniola for Hojeda's gobernación. It is not known what became of them; perhaps Colón gave them to Velásquez for use in Cuba.

4. It is not surprising that pilots were stimulated to combine commerce with navigation. The salary of Juan Vespucci, Amerigo's nephew and pupil, who was pilot of Pedrarias' flagship, was 30,000 maravedies; Juan Serrano, chief pilot of the fleet and one of the famous navigators of the time, got 30,000 plus two *cahices* of wheat.

5. Upper-class recruits were allowed one box each; *hoi polloi* had to make do with two boxes for three men. It was not said how they were to manage their packing (Serrano y Sanz, App. 13).

6. A proposal for quilted-linen armor was also discarded, perhaps unwisely. It was effective—so much so that it is again in style.

7. Significantly, the men of property could use silk saddlecloths (which showed) but not silk undergarments. The penalty for a first offense was confiscation of the *corpus delicti*—to be given, half and half, to the judge and the prosecutor, who presumably could then cut up the underwear for saddle covers (Serrano y Sanz, pp. cclxxxvii–ixn).

CHAPTER XIX

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. VI, chap. 13; Bk. XXVI, chap. 10; Bk. XXIX, chaps. 6-8; Bk. L, chaps. 3, 5; *Sumario*, chap. lxxxi; Martyr, Dec. II, Bk. 7; Dec. III, Bks. 5, 6; Casas, Bk. III, chap. 59; Andagoya, *Relación*; Alvarez, pp. 88-89n, 90-91n; App. 10; Medina, II, 397, 419; Guevara, *Libro de los inventores del arte de marear*.

Notes

1. Alvarez (p. 72n) cites a Muñoz transcript to the effect that after the armada left, the pilot Juan de Camargo was ordered to follow it, with Captain Zorita, to pick up fifty-six islanders. But the Muñoz transcript from the Casa's "book of the armada" (Alvarez, App. 5) says that this caravel preceded the armada to the Canaries. Zorita was certainly on *Santiago*, and *Santiago* left Gomera before the rest of the armada. Also, if Camargo went as far as the Canaries, he came back quickly from there; he was in Spain in mid-1514.

2. Published in 1539; reprinted, under different title, by C. Fernández Duro, *Disquisiciones náuticas*, Vol. II.

3. Martyr, who wrote just after talking with returned shipmasters of the armada and reading the first dispatches about the journey, is positive that the expeditionaries did not see so much as a sign of a native in Dominica, nor does Oviedo mention Indians there. The reference in a letter of the King to Pedrarias' decision not to "hound" the natives of Dominica does not mean he saw any.

4. Oviedo, Bk. XXXIX, chap. 7. Martyr says, "The XI day of the calends of July," but this seems to be a slip or miscopy for "the VI day"—June twenty-sixth.

CHAPTER XX

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chaps. 6-8; Bk. L, chaps. 2, 3; Martyr, Dec. II, Bk. 9; Dec. III, Bks. 6, 10; *Opus epistolarum*, Letters 541, 542; Bishop

Quevedo's memorial of January 1515 (Altolaguirre, App. 53; Medina, II, 434-41); Oviedo's memorial (Medina, II, 259-66); Enciso, *Suma*; Andagoya, *Relación*; Altolaguirre, Apps. 22-30, 65, 74; Medina, II, *passim*; Balboa's letters (Medina, II, 216, 217; Altolaguirre, Apps. 6, 31); "Un religioso domínico" (Muñoz Transcripts, N.Y., Rich 5); Alvarez, Apps. 22, 23, 24; Leyes de Indias, Vol. II: Libro IV, Título xii, Ley 1.

Notes

1. "And whereas it might happen that allotting lands there be some question as to the measurement, we hereby declare that a peonía consists of: a lot 50 *piés* wide and 100 long, 100 *fanegas* of cropland for wheat or barley; 10 [fanegas] for maize; two *huebras* of land for irrigated crops and eight for planting other dry-crop trees; enough pasture land for ten sows, twenty cows, five mares, a hundred ewes, and twenty she-goats. A caballería is: a lot 100 *piés* wide and 200 long, and everything else like five peonías" (Leyes de Indias, Vol. II: Libro IV, Título xii, Ley 1). A huebra of land was as much as could be plowed with one yoke of oxen in a day.

2. Organization of the Ayora expedition was already well advanced by July thirteenth (Medina, II, 500).

3. The medically minded may be interested in the perplexing characteristics of modorra: (1) it affected the central nervous system, producing both lethargy and delirium; (2) it appeared to be highly contagious; (3) it closely resembled recent epidemics in Spain of a "new" pestilence which appears to have been typhus laced with bubonic plague; (4) it broke out over a month after the armada arrived; (5) it was previously unknown in Darién; (6) it did not seriously affect the veteran colonists or the natives of Gran Canaria; (7) it spared a settlement twenty miles from Darién and the ships which left before early August; (8) it did not recur. For the symptoms of modorra see Molina's *Tractado en que se contiene el modo preseruatiuo e curatiuo de pestilencia: juntamente con la cura de otra pestífera enfermedad a quien el vulgo llama Modorra* (Granada, 1554).

4. Cédulas of August 2, 1515, in answer to Balboa's letters of August 1 and November 23, 1514, and to Pedrarias' report of November 20 (Medina, II, 72, 73; Altolaguirre, Apps. 36, 37).

CHAPTER XXI

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chaps. 8, 9; *Sumario*, chap. 61; Martyr, Dec. III, Bk. 6; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 60, 61; Andagoya, *Relación*; Medina, II, *passim*; Alvarez, Apps. 9, 10; Balboa's letters (Medina, II, 217-18; Altolaguirre, App. 33); Muñoz Transcripts, N.Y., Rich 4.

Notes

1. Quevedo's memorial of January 1515, and his letter of January 20, 1515 (Muñoz Transcripts, N.Y., Rich 4). The Medina version of the letter is bad; the Harrisse translation of it (*Discovery of North America*, p. 484) should, in kindness, be ignored.

2. Puente was not alone in suggesting this. Bishop Quevedo expressed the same idea in his memorial of January 1515, with the difference that he strongly advocated that Vasco Núñez be restored to command. Pasamonte, no doubt influenced by the Bishop and Balboa, made the same proposal, adding that perhaps Quevedo should also be left in Tierra Firme (Medina, II, 243).

CHAPTER XXII

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chaps. 9, 10; Bk. XXXIX, chap. 1; Martyr, Dec. III, Bks. 6, 10; Andagoya, *Relación*; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 61-63, 67-68; Enciso, *Suma de geografía*; Herrera, Dec. II, Bk. I, chap. 2; Bishop Quevedo's memorial of January 1515 (Medina, II, 434-41; Altolaguirre, App. 53); "Un religioso dominico" (Muñoz Transcripts, N.Y., Rich 5); Altolaguirre, App. 78; Medina, II, *passim*; Alvarez, Apps. 9, 10, 18; Balboa's letters (Medina, II, 216-18, 398-412; Altolaguirre, Apps. 31, 33).

Notes

1. Four hundred is the number given by Pedrarias and the officials in reports of October 18 and November 26, 1514 (Medina, II, 221; Altolaguirre, p. 66). The Bishop increased it to four hundred and fifty (Me-

dina, II, 426). Enciso said they had two hundred, a figure accepted by Oviedo and Casas.

2. Cieza de León made their acquaintance in Urabá, whither they had moved sometime between 1525 and 1535, after the original Urabae had sought more inaccessible country.

3. There was another Francisco de Avila in Darién who was with Balboa in the discovery of the Pacific. He was probably one of Serrano's men (his permit to leave Spain was dated February 11, 1512). Ayora's man, however, seems to have been the royal captain who went with Pedrarias.

4. This may be the same Garci Alvarez of Moguer with whom Fonseca made a contract for a voyage to the Indies in 1496 (Muñoz Transcripts N.Y., Rich 5).

5. A letter from the Bishop dated April second—not April eleventh, as printed by Medina (II, 209–10)—says in one paragraph that Gusmán got 40,000 pesos of gold. According to the records of the *fundición*, the total was 18,699 pesos, 7 tomines, plus 756 pesos of low-grade guanín. On the basis of the official statements as to the number of men with Gusmán, and of what each share came to in maravedíes, they marked the gold at about 14 carats.

6. Espinosa christened the boy Don Gaspar when he received him in encomienda in 1522. Pacora was then said to be fifteen or sixteen years old (Medina, II, 463). It may be noted that the ruler of a chiefdom called Tamame, adjoining Chimán and Pocorosa, was also called Pacora.

CHAPTER XXIII

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chaps. 9, 10, 33; Martyr, Dec. III, Bks. 6, 10; *Opus epistolarum*, Letters 543, 558; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 65–68; Andagoya, *Relación*; Medina, II, 208–58, *passim*; 338; 399–441, *passim*; 495; Balboa's brevets (Medina, II, 73–76, 208–58, *passim*; 420; Altolaguirre, Apps. 25–30, 34, 35); Balboa's letters (Medina, II, 142, 217–20; Altolaguirre, App. 33); DIHHA, X, 265, 268; XIV, 36, 40, 41; Navarrete, I, cxxx.

Notes

1. See letter of Puente and Márquez, elaborating this theme, January 28, 1516 (DIRD, II, 522–26).

2. The ships were *Santa María de la Consolación*, master, Andrés Niño, and *San Clemente*, later called *Santa María del Ayuda*, master, Bartolomé de Mafra. Judging from their brief careers, the expensive sheathing was a waste of money.

3. "An Adelantado is someone put over some country or province by the King, to rule and govern it in the King's name. And because it is a very great office, he must be a man of great lineage, and most loyal and able." An adelantado functioned also as supreme justice (*merino*), even hearing appeals. He was forbidden to marry anyone native to the province he governed (Leyes [1538], fol. x).

4. The entry in Puente's accounts does not state what this sum was for, or how it was arrived at. It was collected five days after Balboa's brevets were received (Medina, II, 412).

5. Morales had left by April 2. He was taken as far as the port of the Trepadera by ship, and was debited for ninety-five passenger fares at a half peso each. Badajoz must have started very soon after, for the second contingent of his expedition had gone before Balboa wrote to the King on April 30. His expedition was taken as far as Nombre de Dios in Mafra's leaded caravel, for which he was charged 7½ shares of his booty. This was only half what Téllez de Gusmán was charged for a similar service in 1514; presumably Gusmán used two ships to Badajoz' one.

CHAPTER XXIV

Principal Sources

Casas, Bk. 111, chaps. 64–67; Martyr, Dec. III, Bk. 6; Dec. IV, Bk. 10; *Opus epistolarum*, Letters 554, 557; Oviedo, Bk. XIX, chap. 8; Bk. XXIX, chaps. 10, 12; Andagoya, *Relación*; Herrera, Dec. II, Bk. I, chap. 1; Alvarez, Apps. 17, 18, 19; Altolaguirre, Apps. 31 bis, 40–49, 52, 57; Medina, II, 43, 139, 200–59, 400–29, *passim*; DIRD, XXXVI, 380–83, 402–4, 425–27, 437–38; Balboa's letters (Medina, II, 139, 235–36, 237; Altolaguirre, Apps. 39, 44, 50); Pedrarias' memorial (Muñoz Transcripts, N.Y., Rich 4; Medina, II, 256 ff.; Altolaguirre, App. 52).

Notes

1. This is by far the best account of Balboa's second Atrato expedition—a very workmanlike job. Martyr, always badly mixed up where Dabaibe

was concerned, is a misleading source. Incidentally, Martyr's statement that "they went upriver in ordered squadrons four times: the first time, forty leagues; afterwards, fifty, and finally eighty" (which is three times) does not refer to this entrada alone as has sometimes been supposed.

2. Between August 8 and October 20, 1515, twelve letters are known to have been addressed to the King in which Balboa was denounced, mostly for his leadership of the Atrato entrada: six of them from Pedrarias and the officials jointly, three from Pedrarias alone, three from the officials alone. There was also a special report—clearly damaging—on the expedition, bolstered by a secret inquiry, both forwarded to the King via a certain Arriaga on August 8 or 10.

3. Some of the incidents told by Casas—and by no one else—are confirmed by references in proofs of merit made long afterward.

4. Balboa, with his customary moderation, said that twenty-five of Morales' men were killed (letter to the King, October 16, 1515 [Medina, II, 139; Altolaguirre, p. 80]).

5. It is possible that Morales had lost the other 3879 pesos' weight of pearls. However, it is not so stated.

6. It had been decreed that any outstanding piece of loot should be set aside for the King and its appraised value added to what was to be divided among the expeditionaries.

CHAPTER XXV

Principal Sources

Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 69–72, 74, 76; Martyr, Dec. III, Bk. 10; Oviedo, Bk. X, chap. 3; Bk. XII, chap. 7; Bk. XXIX, chap. 10; Andagoya, *Relación*; Medina, II, *passim*; Altolaguirre, Apps. 47, 51, 54–56; Alvarez, App. 10; DIRD, II, 538–49.

Notes

1. The ancient laws concerning the distribution of booty were codified in the *Espéculo* (Looking Glass), "which," a foreword explained, "means as it were 'mirror of all laws.'" They included both accident and property insurance, that is, payments for battle injuries and for damage or loss of equipment, according to a minutely specified schedule quite like those of modern policies. Only after these payments were made, and a sum set

aside for the ransom of Spanish prisoners for whom no counter captives were available, was the booty divided—again, according to a complicated scale in which each item of the equipment of each soldier was considered as well as his rank. The commander got seven shares (Bk. III, Tit. vii). In Darién the distribution of loot was a much simpler business, and although at one time, displeased with Pedrarias' methods, the colonists asked that the old laws be applied, there is no evidence that the request was seriously considered. They probably did not know how extremely complex the provisions were.

2. Martyr, who talked with Badajoz in Spain not long after, says that seventy expeditionaries were killed in Parisa alone, out of a total of one hundred and thirty. Casas copies Martyr in these figures, but adds eighty "wounded without hope of living" in the Parisa encounter. Since this brings the dead and fatally wounded to twenty more than the Martyr-Casas total of expeditionaries, and exactly balances Balboa's version of one hundred and fifty expeditionaries, it is clear that the hopelessness of the injuries was somewhat exaggerated.

3. Oviedo confuses Juanaga (at the pass just south of Nombre de Dios) with Capira, in the hills west of Panama.

4. The massacre of Olano and his companions appears to have occurred in May 1516. News of it had not reached Darién when Cristóbal Serrano was dispatched, in April, to chastise other tribes, but it happened before the reinforcements went to join Espinosa, for Espinosa knew of it before he returned.

5. Balboa's *asiento* gave him eighteen months, presumably from the day he left Darién, and he received one extension of four months. Pedrarias later declared that he should have returned to report on June 24, 1518.

CHAPTER XXVI

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chaps. 11, 12; *Sumario*, chap. 29; Casas, Bk. III, chap. 74; Galíndez de Carbajal, *Anales breves*; Martyr, Dec. IV, Bk. 9; Colmenares' memorials (see sources for Chapter IV, and Medina, II, 152-54); Altolaguirre, Apps. 37, 38; DIHE, II, 375-79; VII, 572-74; DIRD, I, 248, 441; X, 549-55; XXXVI, 380-83, 402-4, 437-38, 441; Medina, II, 56, 72, 73, 221, 247; Bergenroth, *Calendar of letters*, I, 369; Alvarez, App. 12; Sandoval, *Historia*, I, 46-115.

Notes

1. Two *cédulas* of September 1513, addressed respectively to Doña Isabel and Tavira, were signed only by Conchillos and Fonseca. The dispatches which left Darién on August 8 or 10, 1515, and some of those written prior to May, did not reach Spain until December 15 or 23; those of October arrived after the King's death (Medina, II, 72, 73, 221, 247). What Fernando got, during the last months of his life, were probably *résumés* of official reports.

2. Charles' letter acknowledging Cisneros as sole regent was remarkably prompt: it was dated February 14, 1516. At Cisneros' request it was confirmed on June 9. Adrian had been rushed to Castile at the end of 1515 with open-dated letters patent as regent; King Fernando may or may not have known of these, but he had no illusions as to why his grandson had sent an ambassador at this time: "Tell him to go away," he said. "He has only come to see if I am dying." Although Fernando relented and received Adrian graciously, the Ambassador did go away. He was in Seville when the King died. In 1517, Charles' minister, Chièvres, sent Charles Piper, Seigneur of La Chaulx (known in Spain as Laxao), to assist in the Regency, and followed him with another stooge, Armerstoff ("Armors Toro"). Cisneros treated them with great politeness—and ordered that state papers should not be shown to them.

3. It is not clear what became of all the reports and memorials taken by the other special emissaries who went to Spain from Darién in 1515. Arriaga, who left Santa María in August with the official reports and secret inquiry on Balboa's expedition to Dabaibe, is not mentioned again, and the documents he carried are missing. (The single reference to him suggests he was someone well known in Court circles. Perhaps he was Luis de Arriaga, who got a license in 1502 to establish, with two hundred Spanish families, four settlements in Hispaniola.) Of Pedrarias the Nephew, who had started in February with the first representations against Balboa, we are told only that he retired to his home in Avila, where he was subsequently murdered; nothing is said of the papers he carried. Diego de Torres' secretary, Vera, may have delivered the provincial's reports, but there is no evidence that he did. About Cintado, the Bishop's envoy, we know only that he got Quevedo's memorial into the archives, and hence probably reported to Quevedo's superior, Cisneros.

4. On August 8, 1515, the officials of Santo Domingo wrote that Oviedo was about to leave for Spain. He should have been in Castile by mid-

November. However, he said that the King was in Plasencia when he arrived, and Fernando did not get to Plasencia until November twenty-ninth. Oviedo delivered 3000 pesos of gold to the Casa, and proceeded to Court with twelve "very handsome" Carib slaves, some samples of caña-fístula, six loaves of sugar—the first produced in Hispaniola—and "thirty or more parrots of ten or twelve different kinds, and most of them could talk very well" (Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chap. 11; *Sumario*, chap. 29).

5. Oviedo and Colmenares were back in Spain by October. On the sixteenth of that month Colmenares went to see Martyr, in company with a veteran of Badajoz' expedition, Francisco de la Puente (Martyr, Dec. III, Bk. 10).

6. The royal officials, whose salaries were small in relation to prices and to their responsibilities, counted on such compensation. However, they probably held fewer Indians than Casas says they did. Pasamonte, for instance, did not have two hundred Indians in Puerto Rico, as Casas asserts; he had forty-five (register of Indians held by officials in Puerto Rico, 1517 [Tapia y Rivera, *Biblioteca histórica*, p. 180]).

7. News of Fernando's death and Cisneros' regency reached Hispaniola in the first days of April. On April tenth the officials of Santo Domingo wrote to Cisneros in great agitation, full of their plans to forestall insurrection, invasion, and other crises, and requesting urgent dispatch of munitions. Cisneros' reply said, in effect, that they were fools, and suggested that they forget armament and coast guard cutters and settle down to doing their jobs.

CHAPTER XXVII

Principal Sources

The chief source of information on life in Darién is, of course, Oviedo, in passages scattered throughout his *Historia*. Much of the data on the natural history of the Indies in his *Sumario* and in the first fifteen books of the *Historia* are applicable to the Isthmus. Andagoya gives some information, and so do Casas and Martyr. A fair amount can be gathered from what was said in correspondence from Darién, for which see Altolaguirre, Alvarez, and Vol. II of Medina.

Notes

1. Six hundred at the end of 1515 (dispatch of November thirtieth [Medina, II, 246]); the sixty men brought by Garabito for Balboa had

been balanced by departures on December first and at the beginning of February 1516. Most of the surviving captains who were not with Espinosa had left before mid-1516 for Cuba, Hispaniola, or Spain: Fernando de Atienza, Zorita, Morales, Meneses, Francisco Dávila, Gamarra, Peñalosa, Badajoz. Of these only Badajoz returned.

2. Oviedo's list includes beans, celery, onions, lettuce, cabbage, cucumber, parsley, and other vegetables. One suspects that, like some of the fruit trees he speaks of, they were less plentiful and flourishing than he implies, at least in Santa María del Antigua. Oviedo always presented Darién—the country, not the settlers—sunny side up.

3. This is fact, not superstition, however it may offend the modern scientific mind. Anyone who, like the writer, has lived in these latitudes and had occasion to work with lumber, knows by experience that the rule applies to most woods. Timber is best felled in the last quarter of the moon, but in any case should not be cut until two or three days after the full moon.

4. Colombians say that he sings: "*O! mis piés, mis piés, mis piés . . .*" roughly equivalent to "Oh! my poor feet"—a reasonable plaint for a sloth.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chaps. 13, 33; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 72, 73, 77; Andagoya, *Relación*; Herrera, Dec. II, Bk. IX, chap. 9; Espinosa's report (Muñoz Transcripts, N.Y., Rich 5; Altolaguirre, App. 59; Ternaux-Compans, *Archives de voyages*, I, 51-76); Medina, II, 78-182, *passim*; 327-485, *passim*; Altolaguirre, Apps. 63-65; Balboa's asiento (Archivo de Indias, Sevilla, 2-5-2/15 [Libro de registro de Al. de la Puente]; Puente y Olea, p. 146; Alvarez, App. 30).

Notes

1. By far the best version of Espinosa's report is the manuscript in the Muñoz Transcripts in the New York Public Library. That given by Medina (II, 154-83) is clearly taken from the execrable one printed in DIRD, II, 467-522. Cf. Ternaux-Compans, *Archives de voyages*, I, 51-76; Altolaguirre, App. 59.

2. Casas gives an extensive, colorful, and choleric account of the expedition, but runs wild on figures. Espinosa did not start with 300 men; according to the documents, he cannot have had more than about 170 when he left Acla, since, of the original 212, twenty returned to Darién with Pedrarias and others stayed in Acla with Olano. Of these, not less than a score must have escorted Dean Pérez when he returned to Darién from Chimán. Nor did he get over 110,000 pesos of gold in Parisa; his total take was only about half that. And whereas he undoubtedly killed a shocking number of Indians, it may be questioned whether he really killed 40,000. Both Casas and Oviedo confuse this expedition with subsequent ones under Espinosa—from which the statement that Hurtado discovered as far as the Gulf of Nicoya and the reference to Espinosa's burial of 20,000 pesos of gold in Panama.

3. This is the "Maestre Bartolomé" who came to Darién in 1513, and who has been erroneously identified with Bartolomé Ruiz, Pizarro's pilot. Ruiz did not go to the Isthmus until 1519, as is abundantly proven in sworn depositions. Pimienta must have been popular because he was generally referred to by his given name; however, his surname appears in witness to the taking of possession of Terarequí in January of 1519 (Alvarez, App. 33).

4. It is not known when Hernández went to Spain, but his permit to return to Darién was dated October 27, 1516 (CPI [1930], #2247).

CHAPTER XXIX

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. IV, chap. 2; Bk. XXIX, chap. 13; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 74, 75; Andagoya, *Relación*; Martyr, Dec. IV, Bk. 9; Alvarez, Apps. 23, 99, 104; Medina, II, 77–81, 401–47, *passim*; Altolaguirre, Apps. 61, 62, 68; DIRD, III, 556–58.

Notes

1. In the beginning, information about the broma-resistant timber of Careta was credited to Chief Chima; later it was debited to Balboa.

2. It may seem odd that a hundred or so men could not save a pile of lumber and gear before it was washed away. But rivers like the Chucunaque can flood remarkably quickly and with very little fuss. I have seen

one rise thirty-three feet in three or four hours. If the flood came at night, the expeditionaries did well to save themselves.

3. By 1640, the number had been reduced to twelve, who spoke only Spanish ("Descripción de Panamá y su provincia," *Relaciones históricas y geográficas de América Central*, pp. 139–218).

4. The ships of the South Sea Company are variously described as four caravels, three or four bergantines and caravels, etc. The expeditionaries themselves told the King that they had built two caravels, a *fusta* (lighter), and a boat (Alvarez, App. 104). Espinosa said that the *fusta* was called *Santa María de Buena Esperanza*, and the boat *San Cristóbal*; their combined capacity was sixty-seven men (Medina, II, 276). Medina (I, 277, Note 22) thought that these were the two ships which were sold at auction in 1534 after Pedrarias' death. But this was not possible. González Dávila, who came to Castilla del Oro in 1519 with authorization to take Balboa's vessels for his own use, said in 1524 that he had been obliged to build new ones "because the first iv which were built in tierra firme xxxx leagues [away] up a river were lost, as I wrote Y.M. in my previous letter" (Muñoz Transcripts, N.Y., Rich 5). Moreover, *San Cristóbal* and *La Esperanza* were stated to belong to Pedrarias and were auctioned in the settlement of his estate. The Governor had been criticized for building ships to use in personal commerce—specifically, commerce in peaceful Indians seized for slaves.

5. The name was early deformed to Puerto de Piñas (Port of Pineapples). The place is usually referred to today by the name of the village there: Jaqué.

6. There is also confusion over Chiruca and Chochama, both of which (or whom) are credited with lordship over the lower Sambú River. They may have been on either side of the river; on the other hand, it is possible that the chief killed by Morales was Chief Chiruca of Chochama, and that Pequeo was his successor.

7. The order, prompted by Cisneros, was relayed to Pedrarias by the Hieronymites and Zuazo. An otherwise unaccountable sentence in an attack on Zuazo by the officials of Hispaniola, in 1518, to the effect that he had given a judgment in Darién unfavorable to the King, may refer to this matter (DIRD, I, 354–55).

8. It has been said that the five hundred recruits were to have been conducted—or even that they were conducted—to Tierra Firme by Gonzalo de Badajoz, who was then in Spain, and were therefore certainly destined for Castilla del Oro. But the *cédula* concerning them does not

say that Badajoz should take the men. It says he can take letters from the officials of the Casa to the Hieronymite governors "because he is going to those parts" (Alvarez, App. 23). Badajoz got his permit to return to the Isthmus on May 19, 1517 (CPI [1940], #2509). There is no further mention of the proposed reinforcements.

CHAPTER XXX

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XXIX, chap. 12; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 75, 76, 141; Andagoya, *Relación*; Martyr, Dec. IV, Bk. 9; Pedrarias' accusation of Balboa (Altolaguirre, App. 66; Medina, II, 557-63).

Notes

1. The criminal counts of 1514 could be resurrected because Pedrarias, with great foresight, had not allowed them to be disposed of by due process. He had "suspended" them by order, thus enabling himself to pose as a benefactor while keeping a sword of Damocles handily in the air.

CHAPTER XXXI

Principal Sources

Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 74, 76, 106, 132, 147, 152; Oviedo, Bk. VI, chap. 61; Bk. XXIX, chap. 12; Andagoya, *Relación*; Medina, II, 346-58, *passim*; 557-63; Alvarez, App. 132 and pp. 612, 625, 630; DIRD, XXXVI, 428-29; Altolaguirre, App. 66.

Notes

1. The man selected to lead the delayed punitive raid to Careta was Martín de Murga, and the time was July or August 1518. Murga's captives were auctioned on September twenty-ninth; in view of the retiring habits acquired by the surviving Caretaes, he did well to catch the 163 pesos' worth who were declared. Murga was later murdered by the Indians of Bea. Oviedo, who had returned from Spain and was serving as captain of Darién at the time, avenged the killing, but, rather oddly, not on the perpetrator of the crime (Oviedo, Bk. VI, chap. 61).

2. Pedrarias took over Balboa's gobernación and expedition, in person, at the end of January 1519. The Indians were taken to Santa María in late February, and auctioned on March fourteenth and March nineteenth. Together with some captured in Comogre, they sold for 2500 pesos (Medina, II, 417).

3. "In the end, the 1,000 leagues were reduced to 300 . . . but it went for 2 or 3,000 or more inland" (Casas, Bk. III, chap. 132). Later, Casas says that his gobernación was cut to about 260 leagues, but it took in the prize stretch known as the Pearl Coast. Casas' very lengthy relation of his negotiations, difficulties, and triumphs, and of his ill-fated attempt at colonization, are extraordinarily interesting, especially when compared with other accounts of the same events (Oviedo and Gómara).

4. The Chièvres-Chaulx clique was, for obvious reasons, rather generally hated, but the clergy had been particularly incensed by the appointment of Chièvres' nineteen-year-old nephew to succeed Cisneros as Archbishop Primate.

5. Guaranteed, but not, in practice, permitted. The appellate judges in Hispaniola complained that after Pedrarias went to Darién, not one appeal to them had been allowed from Castilla del Oro (DIRD, XXXVI, 428-29).

6. The text of Espinosa's injunction and Pedrarias' declaration is given by Altolaguirre (App. 66) and by Medina (II, 557-63).

7. The twelfth of January, when Pedrarias' order of execution was registered, was Saturday. It is probable that the prisoners were summoned to hear the sentence on Monday and that they were executed the following day, January fifteenth. The Governor was already in Pequeo on the twenty-seventh.

EPILOGUE

Principal Sources

Oviedo, Bk. XVII, chap. 21; Bk. XXIX, chaps. 14-16, 18, 20, 22, *et al.*; Casas, Bk. III, chaps. 106, 108, 161-64; Andagoya, *Relación*; Altolaguirre, App. 67, *et seq.*; Puente y Olea, pp. 147, 149; DIRD, III, 549-56; XXV, 248 ff.; DIRDU, XXIV, 173-92; Medina, II, 89-93, 97-99, 277, 279, 445 ff.; Alvarez, Apps. 31-151.

Notes

1. On April 19, 1520, from Acla, Pedrarias wrote a long memorandum to the King on the requirements of good government in the colony. It does not mention the recent events (Alvarez, App. 42). Incidentally, this document is misdated in Medina, as of 1529. In 1529, Pedrarias was no longer governor of Castilla del Oro.

2. Alarconcillo to the King, June 7, 1519 (Alvarez, App. 77). The youth was given four hundred Indians for himself. Three of Pedrarias' sons were at various times in Castilla del Oro and Nicaragua, but curiously enough, little is said of them. The fourth, Francisco de Bobadilla, still more curiously, vanished into thin air. Pedrarias listed him as one of four sons and five daughters, all born of Doña Isabel, in the will he made in 1514 (Alvarez, App. 151). Doña Isabel, in 1531, ignored his existence: "of three male children that we had, two have died and only one remains to us." The one who remained was Arias González; Juan died in Nicaragua in 1529, and Diego in Spain in 1530 or 1531 (Alvarez, App. 138, 147). A Fray Francisco de Bobadilla went from Panama to Nicaragua in 1527 as vicar general, but he appears to have been a nephew or cousin.

3. It is true that when Pedrarias died, he left debts in Nicaragua and insufficient liquid capital there to cover them. But the Emperor was officially informed that all obligations could be paid, and a balance of 3000 pesos left over, with the gold due to be smelted from Pedrarias' mines (Alvarez, App. 144). The Governor's notorious profits were not kept in the colony, and his will disproves Doña Isabel's claim that he had sold or mortgaged everything he owned before leaving Castile.

4. In June 1519, Charles V heard from Pedrarias that Balboa, a traitor and a rebel, was in prison. In July or early August he learned that Balboa was dead. What else he was told we do not know. Pedrarias did not forward copies of the papers of the trial, but it may be taken that he sent a damning recital of Balboa's crimes. Certainly Charles was told that Balboa had gone to the Pacific coast without authorization from the King or from Pedrarias. In that understanding he assigned Balboa's ships for the use of Gil González Dávila. In September 1520, procuradores from Castilla del Oro informed the Regent, Adrian, that this was untrue (cédula of September 20, 1520 [Medina, II, 89]).

5. Medina, II, 92-93.

6. The cédula which confirmed Pedrarias as governor after Sosa's death had indicated that it was a temporary measure: "for the time being, and

until we order to the contrary." The cédula which supplies Avilanzo's name is printed by Alvarez (App. 95).

7. It was also, as now appeared, a cause which offered only moral rewards. The confiscated property of all five victims had amounted to only 3000 pesos. When Oviedo, charged with collecting the estates, got back to Darién, he found that a third of this had been eaten in "fees" by a special custodian whom Pedrarias had appointed. In the end only 947 pesos are known to have been recovered, of which 277 pesos was paid to Argüello's widow (Medina, II, 98, 99). In so far as Balboa's estate was concerned, it was already mortgaged to Arbolancha, Father Pérez, and other creditors. This must have been a slight shock to Charles as well as to hopeful heirs: in 1520 the King had ordered Oviedo to auction off Balboa's personal and household effects, and to forward his gold and other valuables "in one or two ships" (Alvarez, App. 68).

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Balboa of Darién

DISCOVERER

OF THE

PACIFIC

"Just for an instant, as he stood there solitary between earth and sky, the immensity that stretched away below him was his and his only, vast and inviolate.

"... and Andrés de Valdarrábano sat down to write in fair script the names of the sixty-seven 'caballeros and hidalgos and worthy men who were present in the discovery of the South Sea with the magnificent and most noble lord captain Vasco Núñez de Balboa, Governor for Their Highnesses in Tierra Firme.'

"One can picture the battered compañeros, still somewhat moist-eyed, tearing themselves away from the panorama of descending ridges and distant silver water to bend over the escribano, making sure that the memory of them should endure.

"Having thus registered the discovery with both heaven and earth . . . Vasco Núñez de Balboa took possession of the Pacific Ocean for God and Castile."